

A N
E S S A Y
ON THE
G E N I U S
AND
W R I T I N G S
OF
P O P E.

THE THIRD EDITION,
CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

Satyra quidem tota nostra est : in qua primus insignem
laudem adeptus est Lucilius ; qui quosdam ita
deditos sibi adhuc habet amatores, ut eum, non
eiusdem modo operis autoribus, sed omnibus poetis
præferre, non dubitent. QUINTILIAN.

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M D C C L X I V .

ESSAYS

ON THE

GENIUS

AND

WRITINGS

OF



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MDCCLXXV.

TO
THE REVEREND
DR. YOUNG,
R E C T O R
Of WELWYN in HERTFORDSHIRE.

DEAR SIR,
PERMIT me to break into your retirement
the residence of virtue and literature, and
to trouble you with a few reflections on the me-
rits and real character of an admired author, and
on other collateral subjects of criticism, that will
naturally arise in the course of such an enquiry. No
love of singularity, no affectation of paradoxical
opinions, gave rise to the following work. I
revere the memory of POPE, I respect and
honour his abilities; but I do not think him at
the head of his profession. In other words, in
that species of poetry wherein POPE excelled,
he is superior to all mankind: and I only say,
that this species of poetry is not the most excel-
lent one of the art.

WE do not, it should seem, sufficiently attend

to the difference there is, betwixt a MAN OF WIT, a MAN OF SENSE, and a TRUE POET. Donne and Swift were undoubtedly men of wit, and men of sense: but what traces have they left of PURE POETRY? It is remarkable, that Dryden says of Donne; He was the greatest wit, tho' not the greatest poet of this nation. Fontenelle and La Motte are entitled to the former character; but what can they urge to gain the latter? Which of these characters is the most valuable and useful, is entirely out of the question: all I plead for, is, to have their several provinces kept distinct from each other; and to impress on the reader, that a clear head, and acute understanding are not sufficient, alone, to make a POET; that the most solid observations on human life, expressed with the utmost elegance and brevity, are MORALITY, and not POETRY; that the EPISTLES of Boileau in RHYME, are no more poetical, than the CHARACTERS of La Bruyere in PROSE; and that it is a creative and glowing IMAGINATION, "acer spiritus ac vis," and that alone, that can stamp a writer with this exalted and very uncommon character, which so few possess, and of which so few can properly judge.

FOR one person who can adequately relish, and enjoy, a work of imagination, twenty are to be found

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found who can taste and judge, of observations on familiar life, and the manners of the age. The satires of Ariosto, are more read than the Orlando Furioso, or even Dante. Are there so many cordial admirers of Spenser and Milton, as of Hudibras?—If we strike out of the number of these supposed admirers, those who appear such out of fashion, and not of feeling, Swift's rhapsody on poetry is far more popular, than Aken-side's noble ode to Lord Huntingdon. The EPISTLES on the Characters of men and women, and your sprightly satires, my good friend, are more frequently perused, and quoted, than L'Allegro and Il Penseroso of Milton. Had you written only these satires, you would indeed have gained the title of a man of wit, and a man of sense; but, I am confident, would not insist on being denominated a POET, MERELY on their account.

NON SATIS EST PURIS VERSUM PERSCRIBERE VERBIS.

IT is amazing this matter should ever have been mistaken, when Horace has taken particular and repeated pains, to settle and adjust the opinion in question. He has more than once disclaimed all right and title to the name of POET, on the score of his ethic and satiric pieces.

——NEQUE ENIM CONCLUDERE VERSUM
DIXERIS ESSE SATIS——

are lines, often repeated, but whose meaning is
not

not extended and weighed as it ought to be. Nothing can be more judicious than the method he prescribes, of trying whether any composition be essentially poetical or not ; which is, to drop entirely the measures and numbers, and transpose and invert the order of the words : and in this unadorned manner to peruse the passage. If there be really in it a true poetical spirit, all your inversions and transpositions will not disguise and extinguish it ; but it will retain its lustre, like a diamond, unset, and thrown back into the rubbish of the mine. Let us make a little experiment on the following well-known lines ;

*“ Yes, you despise the man that is confined to books,
 “ who rails at human kind from his study ; tho’
 “ what he learns, he speaks ; and may perhaps
 “ advance some general maxims, or may be right by
 “ chance. The coxcomb bird, so grave and so talk-
 “ ative, that cries whore, knave, and cuckold,
 “ from his cage, tho’ he rightly call many a passen-
 “ ger, you hold him no philosopher. And yet, such is
 “ the fate of all extremes, men may be read too
 “ much, as well as books. We grow more partial,
 “ for the sake of the observer, to observations which
 “ we ourselves make ; less so to written wisdom,
 “ because another’s. Maxims are drawn from
 “ notions, and those from guess.”* What shall we say of this passage ?—Why, that it is most excellent

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excellent sense, but, just as poetical as the “ Qui fit Mæcnas” of the author who recommends this method of trial. Take ten lines of the Iliad, Paradise Lost, or even of the Georgics of Virgil, and see whether by any process of critical chymistry, you can lower and reduce them to the tameness of prose. You will find that they will appear like Ulysses in his disguise of rags, still a hero, tho’ lodged in the cottage of the herdsman Eumæus.

THE Sublime and the Pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poesy. What is there transcendently Sublime or Pathetic in POPE? In his works there is indeed, “ nihil inane, nihil “ arcessitum ;—puro tamen fonti quam magno “ flumini prior ;” as the excellent Quintilian remarks of Lysias. And because I am perhaps unwilling to speak out in plain English, I will adopt the following passage of Voltaire, which, in my opinion, as exactly characterizes POPE, as it does his model Boileau, for whom it was originally designed. “ INCAPABLE PEUTÊTRE DU SUBLIME QUI ELEVE L’AME, ET DU SENTIMENT QUI L’ATTENDRIT, MAIS FAIT POUR ECLAIRER CEUX A QUI LA NATURE ACCORDA L’UN ET L’AUTRE, LABORIEUX, SEVERE, PRECIS, PUR, HARMONIEUX, IL DEVINT, ENFIN, LE POETE DE LA RAISON.”

Our

• OUR English poets may, I think, be disposed in four different classes and degrees. In the first class, I would place, our only three sublime and pathetic poets; SPENCER, SHAKESPEARE, MILTON. In the second class should be ranked, such as possessed the true poetical genius, in a more moderate degree, but had noble talents for moral, ethical, and panegyrical poesy. At the head of these are DRYDEN, PRIOR, ADDISON, COWLEY, WALLER, GARTH, FENTON, GAY, DENHAM, PARNELL. In the third class may be placed, men of wit, of elegant taste, and lively fancy in describing familiar life, tho' not the higher scenes of poetry. Here may be numbered, BUTLER, SWIFT, ROCHESTER, DONNE, DORSET, OLDHAM. In the fourth class, the mere versifiers, however smooth and mellifluous some of them may be thought, should be disposed. Such as PITT, SANDYS, FAIRFAX, BROOME, BUCKINGHAM, LANSDOWN. This enumeration is not intended as a complete catalogue, but only to mark out briefly the different species of our celebrated writers. In which of these classes POPE deserves to be placed, the following work is intended to determine.

I am, DEAR SIR,

Your affectionate

And faithful servant.

A N
E S S A Y
ON THE
GENIUS and WRITINGS
O F
P O P E.

S E C T. I.

*Of the PASTORALS, and the MESSIAH,
an Eclogue.*

PRINCES and Authors are seldom spoken of, during their lives, with justice and impartiality. Admiration and envy, their constant attendants, like two unskilful artists, are apt to overcharge their pieces with too great a quantity of light or of shade; and are disqualified happily to hit upon that middle colour, that mixture of error and excellence, which alone renders every representation of man just and natural.

This perhaps may be one reason, among others, why

B

we

we have never yet seen a fair and candid criticism on the character and merits of our last great poet, Mr. POPE. I have therefore thought, that it would be no unpleasing amusement, or uninstruative employment to examine at large, without blind panegyric, or petulant invective, the writings of this English Classic, in the order in which they are arranged in the elegant edition of Dr. Warburton. As I shall neither censure nor commend, without alledging the reason on which my opinion is founded, I shall be entirely unmoved at the imputation of malignity, or the clamours of popular prejudice.

IT is somewhat strange, that in the pastorals of a young poet there should not be found a single rural image that is new: but this, I am afraid, is the case in the PASTORALS before us. The ideas of Theocritus, Virgil, and Spenser, are indeed here exhibited in language equally mellifluous and pure; but the descriptions and sentiments are trite and common.

THAT the design of pastoral poesy is, to represent the undisturbed felicity of the golden age, is an empty notion, which, though supported by a Rapin and a Fontenelle, I think, all rational critics have agreed to extirpate and explode. But I do not remember, that even these, or any critics have remarked the circumstance that gave origin to the opinion, that any golden

golden age was intended. Theocritus, the father and the model of this enchanting species of composition, lived and wrote in Sicily. The climate of Sicily was delicious, and the face of the country various, and beautiful: its vallies and its precipices, its grottos and cascades were SWEETLY INTERCHANGED, and its flowers and fruits were lavish and luscious. The poet described what he saw and felt: and had no need to have recourse to those artificial assemblages of pleasing objects, which are not to be found in nature. The figs and the honey, which he assigns * as a reward to a victorious shepherd, were in themselves exquisite, and are therefore assigned with great propriety; and the beauties of that luxurious landscape so richly and circumstantially delineated in the close of the seventh idyllium, where all things smelt of summer and smelt of autumn,

Παν' ὡς δ' ἐν θέρει μαλα πικρὸν, ὡς δ' ἐν
ὀπώρας †,

were present and real. Succeeding writers supposing these beauties too great and abundant to be real, referred them to the fictitious and imaginary scenes of a golden age.

A MIXTURE of British and Grecian ideas may justly be deemed a blemish in the PASTORALS of

B 2

POPE:

* Idyll. i. ver. 146.

† Ver. 133.

POPE: and propriety is certainly violated, when he couples Pactolus with Thames, and Windsor with Hybla. Complaints of IMMODERATE heat, and wishes to be conveyed to cooling caverns, when uttered by the inhabitants of Greece, have a decorum and consistency, which they totally lose in the character of a British shepherd: and Theocritus, during the ardours of Sirius, must have heard the murmurs of a brook, and the whispers of a pine *, with more home-felt pleasure, than POPE † could possibly experience upon the same occasion. We can never completely relish, or adequately understand any author, especially any Ancient, except we constantly keep in our eye his climate, his country, and his age. POPE himself informs us, in a note, that he judiciously omitted the following verse,

And list'ning wolves grow milder as they hear ‡

on account of the absurdity, which Spenser overlooked, of introducing wolves into England. But on this principle, which is certainly a just one, may it not be asked, why he should speak, the scene lying in Windsor-Forest, of the SULTRY SIRIUS ||, of the GRATEFUL CLUSTERS of grapes §, of a pipe of reeds ¶, the antique fistula, of *thanking Ceres for a plentiful*

* Idyll. i. ver. 1.

† Past. iv. ver. 1.

‡ Past. ii.

|| Past. ii. ver. 21.

§ Past. iii. ver. 24.

¶ Past. ii. ver. 41.

plentiful harvest *, of the sacrifice of lambs †, with many other instances that might be adduced to this purpose. That POPE however was sensible of the importance of adapting images to the scene of action, is obvious from the following example of his judgment; for in translating,

Audiit EUROTAS, jussitque ediscere LAUROS,

he has dextrously dropt the *laurels* appropriated to Eurotas, as he is speaking of the river Thames, and has rendered it,

Thames heard the numbers, as he flow'd along,
And bade his willows learn the moving song ‡.

IN the passages which POPE has imitated from Theocritus, and from his Latin translator Virgil, he has merited but little applause. It may not be unentertaining to see how coldly and unpoetically POPE has copied the subsequent appeal to the nymphs on the death of Daphnis, in comparison of Milton on LYCIDAS, one of his juvenile pieces.

Πα ποκ' ἀρ' ἠσθ' ὅκα Δαφνις ἔλακτο ; πα πο-
κα, Νυμφαι ;

Ἡ καὶ Πηνειῷ καλὰ τεμπεα, ἢ καὶ Πινδῷ ;

B 3

Οὐ

* Past. ii. ver. 65.

† Past. iv. ver. 81.

‡ Ibid. ver. 14.

Οὐ γὰρ δὴ πόσιμιο μέλαν ποὺν' εἰχέει' Ἀνακτω,
 Οὐδ' Ἀίλινος σκοπία, 'ὅδ' Ἀχχιδ' ἔργον ὕδατος *.

Where stray ye, Muses, in what lawn or grove,
 While your Alexis pines in hopeless love?
 In those fair fields where sacred Isis glides,
 Or else where Cam his winding vales divides †.

Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep
 Clos'd o'er the head of your lov'd Lycidas?
 For neither were ye playing on the steep
 Where your old bards, the famous Druids lie;
 Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
 Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream ‡.

THE mention of places remarkably romantic, the supposed habitation of Druids, bards, and wizards, is far more pleasing to the imagination, than the obvious introduction of Cam and Isis, as seats of the Muses.

A SHEPHERD in Theocritus wishes with much tenderness and elegance, both which must suffer in a literal translation, "Would I could become a murmuring bee, fly into your grotto, and be permitted to creep among the leaves of ivy and fern, that compose the chaplet which adorns your head ||." POPE has thus altered this image,

Oh!

* THEOCRITUS, Idyll. i. 66.

† POPE, Past. ii. 24.

‡ MILTON.

||

— — — — — Αἰθε γενοίμην

Oh! were I made by some transforming pow'r,
The captive bird that sings within thy bow'r!
Then might my voice thy list'ning ears employ;
And I, those kisses he receives, enjoy *.

On three accounts the former image is preferable to the latter: for the pastoral wildness, the delicacy, and the uncommonness of the thought. I cannot forbear adding, that the riddle of the *Royal Oak*, in the first Pastoral, invented in imitation of the Virgilian ænigmas in the third eclogue, favours of pun, and puerile conceit.

Say, Daphnis, say in what glad soil appears
A wondrous tree, that sacred monarchs bears?

With what propriety could the tree, whose shade protected the king, be said to be prolific of princes?

THAT POPE has not equalled Theocritus, will indeed appear less surprising, if we reflect, that no original writer ever remained so unrivalled by succeeding copyists, as this Sicilian master.

If it should be objected, that the barrenness of invention imputed to POPE from a view of his PAS-

B 4

TORALS,

Α βομβευσσα μελισσα, κι' ες τεον ανθρον ικοιμαν,
Τον κισσον διαδυσ, και ταν πλεριν α τυ πυκασ-
ση.

Idyll. iii 12.

* Past. ii. 45.

TORALS, is equally imputable to the *Bucolics* of Virgil, it may be answered, that whatever may be determined of the rest, yet the first and last *Eclogues* of Virgil are indisputable proofs of true genius, and power of fancy. The influence of war on the tranquillity of rural life, rendered the subject of the first new, and interesting: its composition is truly dramatic; and the characters of its two shepherds are well supported, and happily contrasted: and the last has expressively painted the changeful resolutions, the wild wishes, the passionate and abrupt exclamations, of a disappointed and despairing lover.

UPON the whole, the principal merit of the *PASTORALS* of POPE consists in their correct and musical versification; musical, to a degree of which rhyme could hardly be thought capable: and in giving the first specimen of that harmony in English verse, which is now become indispensably necessary; and which has so forcibly and universally influenced the public ear, as to have rendered every moderate rhymers melodious. POPE lengthened the abruptness of Waller, and at the same time contracted the exuberance of Dryden.

I REMEMBER to have been informed, by an intimate friend of POPE, that he had once laid a design of writing *AMERICAN ECLOGUES*: The subject would have been fruitful of the most poetical imagery; and

and, if properly executed, would have rescued the author from the accusation here urged, of having written Eclogues without invention.

OUR author, who had received an early tincture of religion, a reverence for which he preserved to the last, was with justice convinced, that the scriptures of God contained not only the purest precepts of morality, but the most elevated and sublime strokes of genuine poesy; strokes, as much superior to any thing Heathenism can produce, as is Jehovah to Jupiter. This is the case more particularly in the exalted prophecy of Isaiah, which POPE has so successfully versified in an Eclogue, that incontestably surpasses the *Pollio* of Virgil: although perhaps the dignity, the energy, and the simplicity of the original are in a few passages weakened and diminished by florid epithets, and useless circumlocutions.

See nature hastes her earliest wreaths to bring,
With all the incense of the breathing spring*,—

are lines, which have too much prettiness, and too modern an air. The judicious addition of circumstances and adjuncts is what renders poesy a more lively imitation of nature than prose. POPE has been happy in introducing the following circumstance: the prophet says, “The parched ground shall become

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“ a

* MESS. V. 23.

“ a pool;” Our author expresses this idea by saying, that the shepherd,

— *ball* START amid the thirsty wild to hear
New falls of water murmuring in his ear *.

A striking example of a similar beauty may be added from Thomson. Melifander, in the Tragedy of Agamemnon, after telling us he was conveyed in a vessel, at mid-night, to the wildest of the Cyclades, adds, when the pitiless mariners had left him in that dreadful solitude,

— — — — — I never heard
A sound so dismal as their parting oars !

ON the other hand, the prophet has been sometimes particular, when POPE has been only general. “ Lift up thine eyes round about, and see ; all they “ gather themselves together, they come to thee : “ — The multitude of CAMELS shall cover thee : “ the DROMEDARIES of Median and Ephah : “ all they from Sheba shall come : they shall bring “ gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the “ praises of the Lord. All the FLOCKS of Kedar “ shall be gathered together unto thee ; the RAMS “ of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee †.” In imitating this passage, POPE has omitted the different beasts that in so picturesque a manner characterize the different

* MESS. v. 70.

† Isaiah, c. lx. v. 4, 6, 7.

different countries which were to be gathered together on this important event, and says only in undistinguishing terms,

See, barbarous nations at thy gates attend,
Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend ;
See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings,
And heap'd with products of Sabæan springs *

As prosperity and happiness are described in this Eclogue by a combination of the most pleasing and agreeable objects, so misery and destruction are as forcibly delineated in the same Isaiah, by the circumstances of distress and desolation, that were to attend the fall of that magnificent city, Babylon: and the latter is perhaps a more proper and interesting subject for poetry than the former; as such kinds of objects make the deepest impression on the mind: terror being a stronger sensation than joy. Accordingly, a noble ode on the destruction of Babylon, taken from the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah, has been written by Dr. Lowth; whose latin prelections on the inimitable poetry of the Hebrews, abounding in remarks entirely new, delivered in the purest and most expressive language, are the richest augmentation literature has lately received; and from which the following passage, gradually unfolding the singular beauties of this prophecy, is here closely,

* Isaiah, lx. 91.

ly, though faintly, translated, and inserted as a pattern of just criticism.

“ THE prophet having predicted the deliverance of the Jews, and their return into their own country from their rigorous Babylonish captivity, instantly introduces them singing a triumphal song on the fall of the king of Babylon ; a song abounding in the most splendid images, and carried on by perpetual, and those very beautiful, personifications. The song begins with a sudden exclamation of the Jews, expressing their joy and wonder at the unexpected change of their condition, and death of the tyrant. Earth with her inhabitants triumphs ; the firs and cedars of Libanus, under which images the allegoric style frequently shadows the kings and princes of the Gentiles, rejoice, and insult with reproaches the broken power of their most implacable foe.

She is at rest, the whole earth is quiet: they break forth
into singing.

Even the firs rejoice at thee, the cedars of Libanus :
Since thou art laid low, no feller is come up against us.

There follows a most daring prosopopoeia of ORCUS, or the infernal regions : he rouses his inhabitants, the manes of princes, and the shades of departed kings : immediately all of them arise from their
thrones,

thrones, and walk forward to meet the king of Babylon; they insult and deride him, and gather consolation from his calamity.

Art thou also made weak as we? art thou made like unto us?

Is thy pride dashed down to Orcus, the noise of thy harps?
The worm is strewn under thee, the earth-worm is thy covering!

The Jews are again represented speaking: they most strongly exaggerate his remarkable fall by an exclamation formed in the manner of funeral lamentations.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!

Thou art dashed down to the earth, thou that didst crush the nations!

They next represent the king himself speaking, and madly boasting of his unbounded power, whence the prodigiousness of his ruin is wonderfully aggravated. Nor is this enough; a new character is immediately formed: Those are introduced who found the body of the king of Babylon cast out: they survey it closely and attentively, and at last hardly know it.

Is this the man who made earth tremble, who shook the kingdoms?

Who

Who made the world a solitude, and destroyed its cities ?

They reproach him with the loss of the common rite of sepulture, which was deservedly denied to him for his cruelty and oppression, and curse his name, his race, and posterity. The scene is closed by a most awful speech of God himself, menacing a perpetual extirpation to the king of Babylon, to his descendants, and to his city ; and confirming the immutability of his councils by the ratification of a solemn oath.

WHAT images, how various, how thick-sown, how sublime, exalted with what energy, what expressions, figures, and sentiments, are here accumulated together ! We hear the Jews, the cedars of Libanus, the shades of the departed kings, the kings of Babylon, those who find his body, and lastly Jehovah himself, all speaking in order ; and behold them acting their several parts, as it were in a drama. One continued action is carried on ; or rather a various and manifold series of different actions is connected ;—an excellence, more peculiarly appropriated to the sublimer ode, and consummately displayed in this poem of Isaiah, which is the most perfect and unexampled model, among all the monuments of antiquity. The personifications are frequent but not confused ; are bold but not affected : a free, lofty, and truly
divine

divine spirit predominates through the whole. Nor is any thing wanting to crown and complete the sublimity of this ode with absolute beauty; nor can the Greek or Roman poesy produce any thing that is similar, or second to this ode *".

It cannot be thought strange, that he who could so judiciously explain, could as poetically express, the ideas of Isaiah: the latter he has performed in many instances; but in none more strikingly than in the following, which magnificently represents the Messiah treading the wine-press in his anger, and which an impartial judge, not blinded by the charms of antiquity, will think equal to any description in Virgil, in point of elegance and energy:

—Ille patris vires indutus et iram

Dira rubens graditur, per stragem et fracta potentum

Agmina, prona solo; prostratisque hostibus ultor

Insultat; ceu præla novo spumantia musto

Exercens, salit attritas calcator in uvas,

Congestamque struem subigit: cæde atra recenti

Crura madent, rorantque inspersæ sanguine vestes *.

* Prælect. xiii. pag. 121.

† Ibid. vii. pag. 62.

S E C T. II.

Of WINDSOR-FOREST, and LYRIC Pieces.

DESCRPTIVE Poetry was by no means the shining talent of POPE. This assertion may be manifested by the few images introduced in the poem before us, which are not equally applicable to any place whatsoever. Rural beauty in general, and not the peculiar beauties of the forest of Windsor, are here described. Nor are the sports of setting, shooting, and fishing, included between the ninety-third and one hundred and forty-sixth verses, to which the reader is referred, at all more appropriated. The stag-chase, that immediately follows, although some of the lines are incomparably good *, is not so full, so animated, and so circumstantiated, as that of Somerville.

THE digression that describes the demolition of the thirty villages by William the Conqueror, is well imagined ; particularly,

Round broken columns clasping ivy twin'd,
O'er heaps of ruin stalk'd the stately hind ;
The fox obscene to gaping tombs retires,
And savage howlings fill the sacred quires †.

Though

* See particularly, ver. 151.

† Ver. 69.

Though I cannot forbear thinking, that the following picture of the ruins of Godstow-Nunnery, drawn, it should seem, on the spot, and worthy the hand of Paul Brill, is by no means excelled by the foregoing.

Qua nudo Rosamonda humilis sub culmine tecti

Marginis obscuri servat inane decus,

Rara intermissæ circum vestigia molis,

Et sola in vacuo tramite porta labat :

Sacræ olim sedes riguæ convallis in umbra,

Et veteri pavidum religione nemus.

Pallentes nocturna ciens campana sorores

Hinc matutinum sæpe monebat avem ;

Hinc procul in media tardæ caliginis hora

Prodidit arcanas arcta fenestra faces :

Nunc muscosa extant sparsim de cespite saxa,

Nunc muro avellunt germen agreste boves.*

VOLTAIRE, that lively maintainer of many a paradox, is inclined to dispute the truth of the devastation imputed to William I. but for a reason very strange and inconclusive. “ Une telle action, says he, est trop insensée pour etre vraisemblable. Les historiens ne font pas attention qu’il faut au moins vingt années pour qu’un nouveau plan d’arbres devienne une forêt propre a là chasse. On lui fait semer cette forêt en 1080, il avoit alors 63 ans. Quelle apparence y a-t-il, qu’un homme raisonnable ait à cet âge détruit des villages pour semer quinze lieues

* Carmina Quadrages. Oxon. 1748. pag. 3.

lieues en bois, dans l'espérance d'y chasser un jour *?" There is indeed some probability, that the character of this prince has been misrepresented, and his oppressions magnified. The law of the curfeu-bell, by which every inhabitant of England was obliged to extinguish his fire and candles at eight in the evening, has been usually alledged as the institution of a capricious tyrant. But this law, as Voltaire † rightly observes, was so far from being absurdly tyrannical, that it was an ancient custom established among all the monasteries of the north. Their houses were built of wood, and so cautious a method to prevent fire, was an object worthy a prudent legislator. A more amiable idea than POPE has here exhibited of the Conqueror, is given us of the same prince, by that diligent enquirer into antiquity the President Henault, in a passage that contains some curious particulars, characteristical of the manners of that age. "This monarch protected letters, at a time, when books were so rare and uncommon, that a countess of Anjou gave for a collection of homilies, two hundred sheep, a measure of wheat, another of rye, a third of millet, and a certain number of the skins of martens ‡." But to return. The story

* Abregé de l'Histoire Universelle, &c. tom. 1. pag. 280.

† Ibid.

‡ Novel Abregé Chronologique de l'Histoire de France. tom. 1. pag. 126. To this useful and entertaining work Voltaire has often been deeply indebted, without confessing his obligation.

story of * Lodona is prettily Ovidian; but there is scarcely a single incident in it, but what is borrowed from some transformation of Ovid. The picture of a virtuous and learned man in retirement † is highly finished, as the poet was here in his proper element, recommending integrity and science. He has nowhere discovered more poetic enthusiasm, than where, speaking of the poets who lived or died near this spot, he breaks out,

I seem through consecrated walks to rove,
I hear soft music die along the grove;
Led by the sound I roam from shade to shade,
By godlike poets venerable made ‡.

The enumeration of the princes who were either born or interred at Windsor is judiciously introduced. Yet I have frequently wondered, that he should have omitted the opportunity of describing at length its venerable ancient castle, and the fruitful and extensive prospects § which it commands. He slides with dexterity and address from speaking of the miseries of the civil war to the blessings of peace ||. OLD FA-

THER

* Ver. 171. † Ver. 233. ‡ Ver. 265.

§ The great improvements lately made near Windsor-lodge, by the Duke of Cumberland, particularly the magnificent lake and cascade, highly deserve to be celebrated by some future POPE; and would have contributed not a little to the beauty of the poem now before us.

|| Ver. 324.

THE THAMES is rais'd, and acts, and speaks,
with becoming dignity. And though the trite and
obvious insignia of a river god are attributed, yet
there is one circumstance in his appearance highly
picturesque,

His sea-green mantle waving with the wind *.

The relievo upon his urn is also finely imagined,

The figur'd streams in waves of silver roll'd,
And on their banks Augusta rose in gold †.

He has with exquisite skill selected only those ri-
vers as attendants of Thames, who are his subjects,
his tributaries, or neighbours. I cannot resist the
pleasure of transcribing the passage.

First the fam'd authors of his ancient name,
The winding Isis, and the fruitful Tame :
The Kennet swift, for silver eels renown'd,
The Loddon flow, with verdant osiers crown'd :
Cole, whose dark streams his flowery islands lave,
And chalky Wey, that rolls a milky wave :
The blue transparent Vandalis appears ;
The gulphy Lee his sedgy tresses rears ;
The sullen Mole that hides his diving flood,
And silent Darent stain'd with British blood ‡.

As

* Ver. 48.

† Ver. 333.

‡ Ver. 337.

As I before produced a passage of Milton which I thought superior to a similar one of POPE, I shall, in order to preserve impartiality, produce another from Milton, in which I think him inferior to the last quoted passage, except perhaps in the third line; first remarking that both authors are much indebted to Spenser *,* and perhaps to Drayton.

Rivers arise! whether thou be the son
Of utmost Tweed, or Ouse, or gulphy Dun,
Or Trent, who like some earth-born giant spreads
His thirty arms along th' indented meads,
Or sullen Mole, that runneth underneath,
Or Severn swift, guilty of maiden's death,
Or rocky Avon, or of sedgy Lee,
Or coaly Tine, or ancient hallow'd Dee,
Or Humber loud that keeps the Scythian's name,
Or Medway smooth, or royal-towred Thame †.

THE poets, both ancient and modern, are obliged to the rivers for some of their most striking descriptions. The Tiber, and the Nile of Virgil, the Aufidus of Horace, the Sabrina of Milton, and the Scamander of Homer, are among their capital figures.

THE influences and effects of peace, and its consequence, a diffusive commerce, are expressed by selecting

* Fairy Queen, B. iv. C. 11.

† At a vacation exercise, &c. Ver. 91. Milton was now aged but nineteen.

selecting such circumstances, as are best adapted to strike the imagination by lively pictures ; the selection of which chiefly constitutes true poetry. An historian or prose-writer might say, " Then shall the most distant nations croud into my port : " a poet sets before your eyes " the ships of uncouth form," that shall arrive in the Thames * ;

And *feather'd* people croud my wealthy side ;
And *naked* youths, and *painted* chiefs admire
Our speech, our colour and our strange *attire*.

And the benevolence and poetry of the succeeding with, are worthy admiration,

Till the freed Indians in their native groves,
Reap their own fruits, and woo their *sable* loves ;
Peru once more a race of kings behold,
And other Mexicos be roof'd with gold †.

The two epithets *native* and *sable* have peculiar elegance and force ; and as Peru was particularly famous for its long succession of Incas, and Mexico for many magnificent works of massy gold, there is great propriety in fixing the restoration of the grandeur of each to that object, for which each was once so remarkable.

THE groupe of allegorical personages that succeeds

* Ver. 400. et seq.

† Ver. 407.

ceeds the last mentioned lines, are worthy the pencil of Rubens or Julio Romano: it may, perhaps, however be wished that the epithets *barbarous* (discord), *mad* (ambition), *bateful* (envy) *, had been particular and picturesque, instead of general and indiscriminating; though it may possibly be urged, that in describing the dreadful inhabitants of the portal of hell, Virgil has not always used such adjuncts and epithets as a painter or statuary might work after; he says only *ultrices CURÆ*, *mortiferum BELLUM*, *mala MENTIS GAUDIA*; particularly, *malesuada* is only applied to FAMES, instead of a word that might represent the meagre and ghastly figure intended. I make no scruple of adding, that in this famous passage, Virgil has exhibited no images so lively and distinct, as these living figures painted by POPE, each of them with their proper insignia and attributes.

—ENVY her own snakes shall feel †,
 And PERSECUTION mourn his broken wheel;
 There FACTION roar, REBELLION bite her chain,
 And gasping FURIES thirst for blood in vain.

A PERSON of no small rank has informed me, that Mr. Addison was inexpressibly chagrined at this noble conclusion of WINDSOR-FOREST, both as a politician and as a poet. As a politician, because it so highly celebrated that treaty of peace which he deemed

* Ver. 417. et seq.

† Ibid.

deemed so pernicious to the liberties of Europe; and as a poet, because he was deeply conscious that his own *CAMPAIGN*, that gazette in rhyme, contained no strokes of such genuine and sublime poetry as the conclusion before us.

— IT is one of the greatest and most pleasing arts of descriptive poetry, to introduce moral sentences and instructions in an oblique and indirect manner, in places where one naturally expects only painting and amusement. We have virtue, as *POPE* remarks, * put upon us by surprize, and are pleased to find a thing where we should never have looked to meet with it. I must do a noble English poet the justice to observe, that it is this particular art that is the very distinguishing excellence of *COOPER'S HILL*; throughout which, the descriptions of places, and images raised by the poet, are still tending to some hint, or leading into some reflection, upon moral life, or political institution; much in the same manner as the real sight of such scenes and prospects, is apt to give the mind a composed turn, and incline it to thoughts and contemplations that have a relation to the object. This is the great charm of the incomparable *ELEGY* written in a Country Church-Yard. Having mentioned the rustic monuments and simple epitaphs of the swains, the amiable poet falls into a very natural reflection:

For

* *Iliad*. B. 16. in the notes: Ver. 465.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 25

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?

OF this art POPE has exhibited some specimens in the poem we are examining, but not so many as might be expected from a mind so strongly inclined to a moral way of writing. After speaking of hunting the hare, he immediately subjoins, much in the spirit of Denham,

Beasts urg'd by us their fellow beasts pursue,
And learn of man each other to undo *.

Where he is describing the tyrannies formerly exercised in this kingdom,

Cities laid waste, they storm'd the dens and caves,

He instantly adds, with an indignation becoming a true lover of liberty,

For wiser brutes were backward to be slaves †.

BUT I am afraid our author in the following passage has fallen into a fault very uncommon in his writings,

C

* Ver. 124.

† Ver. 50.

writings, a reflection that is very far-fetched and forced ;

Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,
And part admit, and part exclude the day ;
As some coy nymph her lover's warm address
Nor quite indulges, nor can quite repress *.

Bohours would rank this comparison among false thoughts and Italian conceits ; such particularly as abound in the works of Marino. The fallacy consists in giving design and artifice to the wood, as well as to the coquette ; and in putting the light of the sun and the warmth of a lover on a level.

A PATHETIC reflection, properly introduced into a descriptive poem, will have greater force and beauty, and more deeply interest a reader, than a moral one. When POPE therefore has described a pheasant shot, he breaks out into a very masterly exclamation ;

Ah ! what avail his glossy varying dyes,
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold †.

THIS exquisite picture heightens the distress, and powerfully

* Ver. 16.

† Ver. 115.

powerfully excites the commiseration of the reader. Under this head, it would be unpardonable to omit a capital, and, I think, the most excellent example extant, of the beauty here intended, in the third Georgic of Virgil *. The poet having mournfully described a steer struck with a pestilence, and falling down dead in the middle of his work, artfully reminds us of his former services;

Quid labor aut benefacta juvant? Quid vomere terras
Invertisse graves †? —————

This circumstance would have been sufficient, as it raised our pity from a motive of gratitude; but with this circumstance the tender Virgil was not content; what he adds therefore of the natural undeviating temperance of the animal, who cannot have contracted disease by excess, and who for that reason deserved a better fate, is moving beyond compare:

—Atqui non Massica Bacchi
Munera, non illis epulæ nocuere repostæ!
Frondebis, et victu pascuntur simplicis herbæ;
Pocula sunt fontes liquidi, atque exercita cursu
Flumina, nec somnos abruptit cura salubres.

C 2

OF

* Ver. 525.

† By the epithet GRAVES Virgil insinuates, after his manner, the difficulty and laboriousness of the work.

OF English poets, perhaps, none have excelled the ingenious Mr. Dyer in this oblique instruction, into which he frequently steals imperceptibly, in his little descriptive poem entitled *GRONGAR HILL*, where he disposes every object so as it may give occasion for some observation on human life. Denham himself is not superiour to Mr. Dyer in this particular. After painting a landscape very extensive and diversified, he adds ;

Thus is nature's vesture wrought,
To instruct our wandering thought,
Thus she dresses green and gay,
To disperse our cares away !

Another view from his favourite spot, gives him an opportunity for sliding into the following moralities.

* How close and small the hedges lie!
What streaks of meadows cross the eye !
A step methinks may pass the stream,
So little distant dangers seem ;
So we mistake the Future's face
Ey'd thro' hope's deluding glass.
As yon summits soft and fair,
Clad in colours of the air,
Which to those who journey near,
Barren and brown and rough appear,

Still

* In this light also his poem on the Ruins of Rome deserves a Perusal. *Dodley's Miscell.* vol. i. pag. 72.

Still we tread the same coarse way,
The present's still a cloudy day.

THE unexpected insertion of such reflections, imparts to us the same pleasure that we feel, when in wandering through a wilderness or grove, we suddenly behold in the turning of the walk, a statue of some VIRTUE or MUSE.

IT may be observed in general, that Description of the external beauties of nature, is usually the first effort of a young genius, before he hath studied manners and passions. Some of Milton's most early, as well as most exquisite pieces, are his *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*; if we may except his *Ode on the Nativity of Christ*, which is indeed prior in the order of time, and in which a penetrating critic might have discovered the seeds of that boundless imagination, which afterwards was to produce the *Paradise Lost*. This ode, which, by the way, is not sufficiently read nor admired, is also of the descriptive kind; but the objects of its description are great, and striking to the imagination; the false deities of the Heathen forsaking their temples on the birth of our saviour; divination and oracles at an end; which facts, though perhaps not historically true, are poetically beautiful.

ESSAY ON THE GENIUS

The lonely mountains o'er,
 And the resounding shore,
 A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament
 From haunted spring, and dale
 Edg'd with poplar pale,
 The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
 With flower-enwoven tresses torn
 The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn*.

The lovers of poetry, and to such only I write, will not be displeased at my presenting them also with the following image, which is so strongly conceived, that methinks I see at this instant the dæmon it represents;

And sullen Moloch fled
 Hath left in shadows dread,
 His burning idol all of blackest hue;
 In vain with cymbals ring
 They call the griesly king,
 In dismal dance about the furnace blue†.

Attention is irresistibly awakened and engaged by that air of solemnity, and enthusiasm, that reigns in the following stanzas:

The

* On the Morning of Christ's nativity. Newton's edition octavo. Vol. ii. pag. 28, 29, of the miscellaneous poems.

† See also verses written at a Solemn music, and on the Passion in the same volume; and a vacation exercise, pag. 9. in all which are to be found many strokes of the sublime.

The oracles are dumb *,
 No voice or hideous hum,
 Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving;
 No nightly trance, or breathed spell,
 Inspires the pale-ey'd priest from the prophetic cell.

Such is the power of true poetry, that one is almost inclined to believe the superstitions here alluded to, to be real; and the succeeding circumstances make one start and look around;

In consecrated earth,
 And on the holy hearth,
 The lars and lemurs moan with midnight plaint;
 In urns and altars round
 A drear and dying sound
 Affrights the flamens at their service quaint?

Methinks we behold the priests interrupted in the middle of the secret ceremonies they were performing, "in their temples dim," gazing with ghastly eyes on each other, and terrified, and wondering from whence these ærial voices should proceed! I have dwelt chiefly on this ode as much less celebrated than *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, which are now universally known; but which by a strange fatality lay in a sort of obscurity, the private enjoyment of a few curious readers, till they were set to admirable music by Mr. Handel. And indeed this volume of

C 4

Milton's

Milton's miscellaneous poems has not till very lately met with suitable regard. Shall I offend any rational admirer of POPE by remarking, that these juvenile descriptive poems of Milton, as well as his latin elegies, are of a strain far more exalted than any the former author can boast? Let me add at the same time, what justice obliges me to add, that they are, far more incorrect. For in the very ode before us, occur one or two passages that are puerile and affected, to a degree not to be paralleled in the purer but less elevated, compositions of POPE. The season being winter when Jesus was born, Milton says,

Nature in awe to HIM *,
Had doff'd her gawdy trim.

And afterwards observes, in a very epigrammatic and forced thought, unsuitable to the dignity of the subject and of the rest of the ode, that, " she wooed

* This conceit with the rest, however is more excusable, if we recollect how great a reader, especially at this time, Milton was of the Italian Poets. It is certain that Milton, in the beginning of the ode, had the third sonnet of Petrarch strong in his fancy,

Era 'l giorno, ch' al sol si scoloraro
Per la pietà del suo fattore i rai;
Quand', &c.

wooded the air, to hide her guilty front with innocent
snow,"

And on her naked shame *,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The faintly veil of maiden white to throw,
Confounded that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

" C'est assez, to apply the words of the sensible
Voltaire, d'avoir cru appercevoir quelques erreurs
d'invention dans ce grand genie c'est une consolation
pour un esprit aussi borné que le mien, d'être bien
persuadé que les plus grands hommes se trompent
comme le vulgaire."

It would be unpardonable to conclude these re-
marks on descriptive poetry, without taking notice
of the SEASONS of Thomson, who had peculiar
and powerful talents for this species of composition.
Let the reader therefore pardon a digression, if such
it be, on his merits and character.

THOMSON was blessed with a strong and copious
fancy; he hath enriched poetry with a variety of
new and original images, which he painted from na-
ture itself, and from his own actual observations;
his descriptions have therefore a distinctness and

C 5

truth,

* Milton's Miscellaneous Poems, vol. ii. pag. 19.

truth, which are utterly wanting to those of poets who have only copied from each other, and have never looked abroad on the objects themselves. Thomson was accustomed to wander away into the country for days and for weeks, attentive to, "each rural sight, each rural sound;" while many a poet who has dwelt for years in the Strand, has attempted to describe fields and rivers, and generally succeeded accordingly. Hence that nauseous repetition of the same circumstances; hence that disgusting impropriety of introducing what may be called a set of hereditary images, without proper regard to the age, or climate, or occasion, in which they were formerly used. Though the diction of the SEASONS is sometimes harsh and inharmonious, and sometimes turgid and obscure; and though in many instances, the numbers are not sufficiently diversified by different pauses, yet is this poem on the whole, from the numberless strokes of nature in which it abounds, one of the most captivating and amusing in our language, and which, as its beauties are not of a fugacious kind, as depending on particular customs and manners, will ever be perused with delight. The scenes of Thomson are frequently as wild and romantic as those of Salvator Rosa, pleasingly varied with precipices and torrents, and "castled cliffs," and deep vallies, with piny mountains, and the gloomiest caverns. Innumerable are the little circumstances in his descriptions, totally unobserved by all his predecessors.

deceffors. What poet hath ever taken notice of the leaf, that towards the end of autumn,

Inceffant ruffles from the mournful grove *,
Oft startling fuch as, ftudious, walk below,
And slowly circles through the waving air ?

Or, who, in fpeaking of a fummer evening hath ever mentioned,

The quail that clamours for his running mate ?

Or the following natural image at the fame time of the year ?

Wide o'er the thiftly lawn, as fwells the breeze,
A whitening ſhower of vegetable down
Amuſive floats †. — — —

In what other poet, do we find the ſilence and expectation that precedes an April ſhower inſiſted on, as in ver. 165 of SPRING ? Or where,

The ſtealing ſhower is ſcarce to patter heard,
By fuch as wander through the foreſt walks,
Beneath th' umbrageous multitude of leaves ‡.

How full, particular and pictureſque is this aſſemblage of circumſtances that attend a very keen froſt in a night of winter !

Loud

Ver. 1000.

† Ver. 1645.

‡ Ver. 176.

Loud rings the frozen earth, and hard reflects
 A double noise ; while at his evening watch
 The village dog deters the nightly thief ;
 The heifer lows ; the distant water-fall
 Swells in the breeze ; and with the hasty tread
 Of traveller, the hollow-sounding plain
 Shakes from afar *. — — —

In no one subject are common writers more confused and unmeaning, than in their descriptions of rivers, which are generally said only to wind and to murmur, while their qualities and courses are seldom accurately marked. Examine the exactness of the ensuing description, and consider what a perfect idea it communicates to the mind.

Around th' adjoining brook, that purls along
 The vocal grove, now fretting o'er a rock,
 Now scarcely moving through a reedy pool,
 Now starting to a sudden stream, and now
 Gently diffus'd into a limpid plain ;
 A various groupe the herds and flocks compose,
 Rural confusion † !

A groupe worthy the pencil of Giacomo da Bassano, and so minutely delineated, that he might have worked from this sketch ;

On

* Winter, Ver. 735.

† Summer, Ver. 477.

— — — On the grassy bank
 Some ruminating lie ; while others stand
 Half in the flood, and often bending sip
 The circling surface. — — —

He adds, that the ox in the middle of them,

— — — — From his sides
 The troublous insects lashes, to his sides
 Returning still *.

A natural circumstance, that to the best of my remembrance hath escaped even the natural Theocritus. Nor do I recollect that any poet hath been struck with the murmurs of the numberless insects, that swarm abroad at the noon of a summer's day ; as attendants of the evening indeed, they have been mentioned ;

Refounds the living surface of the ground :
 Nor undelightful is the ceaseless hum
 To him who muses through the woods at noon ;
 Or drowsy shepherd as he lies reclin'd
 With half-shut eyes †. — — —

But the novelty and nature we admire in the descriptions of Thomson are by no means his only excellencies ; he is equally to be praised, for impressing on our minds the effects, which the scene delineated
 would

* Summer, Ver. 485. et seq.

† Ibid. Ver. 299.

would have on the present spectator or hearer. Thus having spoken of the roaring of the savages in a wilderness of Africa, he introduces a captive, who though just escaped from * prison and slavery under the tyrant of Morocco, is so terrified and astonished at the dreadful uproar, that

The wretch half wishes for his bonds again.

Thus also having described a caravan lost and overwhelmed in one of those whirlwinds that so frequently agitate and lift up the whole sands of the desert, he finishes his pictures by adding that,

— — — In Cairo's crouded streets †,
Th' impatient merchant, wondering waits in vain,
And Mecca saddens at the long delay.

And thus, lastly, in describing the pestilence that destroyed the British troops at the siege of Carthage-na, he has used a circumstance inimitably lively, picturesque, and striking to the imagination; for he says that the admiral not only heard the groans of the sick that echoed from ship to ship, but that he also pensively stood, and listened at midnight to the dashing of the waters, occasioned by throwing the dead bodies into the sea;

Heard,

* Summer, Ver. 925.

† Ibid. Ver. 966.

Heard; nightly, plung'd into the sullen waves,
The frequent corse *. — — —

A minute and particular enumeration of circumstances judiciously selected, is what chiefly discriminates poetry from history, and renders the former, for that reason, a more close and faithful representation of nature than the latter. And if our poets would accustom themselves to contemplate fully every object, before they attempted to describe it, they would not fail of giving their readers more new images than they generally do †.

THESE

* Ver. 1035.

† A summer evening, for instance, after a shower, has been frequently described : but never, that I can recollect, so justly as in the following lines, whose greatest beauty is that hinted above, a simple enumeration of the appearances of nature, and of what is actually to be seen at such a time. They are not unworthy the correct and pure Tibullus.

Vespere sub verno, tandem actis imbribus, æther
Guttatim sparsis rorat apertus aquis.
Aureus abrupto curvamine desuper arcus
Fulget, et ancipiti lumine tingit agros.
Continuò sensus pertentat frigoris aura
Vivida, et insinuans mulcet amœnus odor.
Pallentes sparsim accrescunt per pascua fungi,
Lætius et torti graminis herba viret.
Plurimus annosâ decussus ab arbore limax
In putri lentum tramite sulcat iter.

Splendidus

THESE observations on Thomson, which however would not have been so large, if there had been already any considerable criticism on his character, might be still augmented by an examination and developement of the beauties in the Loves of the birds in SPRING, verse 580. A view of the torrid zone in SUMMER, verse 626. The rise of fountains and rivers in AUTUMN, verse 781. A man perishing in the snows in WINTER, verse 277. The wolves descending from the Alps, and a view of winter within the polar circle, verse 809, which are all of them highly-finished originals, excepting a few of those blemishes intimated above. WINTER is in my apprehension the most valuable of these four poems; the scenes of it, like those of Il Penseroso

*Splendidus accendit per dumos lampida vermis,
Roscida dum tremulâ semita luce micat.*

These are the particular circumstances that usually succeed a shower at that season, and yet these are new and untouched by any other writer. The *Carmina Quadragesimalia*, volume the second, printed at Oxford 1748, from whence this is transcribed, (page 14,) contain many copies of exquisite descriptive poetry, in a genuine classical style. See particularly The Rivers, page 4. The Morning, page 12. The House of Care, from Spenser, page 16. The Mahometan paradise, page 32. The Trees of different soils, page 63. The Bird's nest, page 82. Geneva, page 89. Virgil's tomb, page 97. The Indian, page 118. The House of Discord, page 133. Columbus first discovering the land of the West Indies, page 125, &c.

feroso of Milton, being of that awful, solemn, and pensive kind, on which a great genius best delights to dwell.

POPE it seems was of opinion, that descriptive poetry is a composition as absurd as a feast made up of sauces : and I know many other persons that think meanly of it. I will not presume to say it is equal, either in dignity or utility to those compositions that lay open the internal constitution of man, and that IMITATE characters, manners, and sentiments. I may however remind such contemners of it, that, in a sister-art, landscape painting claims the very next rank to history-painting ; being ever preferred to single portraits, to pieces of still-life, to droll figures, to fruit and flower-pieces ; that Titian thought it no diminution of his genius, to spend much of his time in works of the former species ; and that, if their principles lead them to condemn Thomson, they must also condemn the Georgics of Virgil, and the greatest part of the noblest descriptive poem extant, I mean that of Lueretius.

WE are next to speak of the LYRIC pieces of POPE. He used to declare, that if Dryden had finished a translation of the Iliad, he would not have attempted one after so great a master ; he might have said with more propriety, I will not write a music-ode after Alexander's Feast, which the variety and harmony
of

of its numbers, and the beauty and force of its images, have conspired to place at the head of modern lyric compositions. This of Mr. POPE is, however, indisputably the second of the kind, * “propior tamen

* The inferiority of Addison's Ode, to POPE's, on this subject, is manifest and remarkable. What prosaic tameness and insipidity do we meet with in the following lines?

Cecilia's name does all our numbers grace,
From every voice the tuneful accents fly,
In soaring trebles now it rises high,
And now it sinks and dwells upon the base.

This almost descends to burlesque. What follows is hardly rhyme, and surely not poetry :

Consecrate the place and day,
To music and Cecilia.
Music the greatest *good* that mortals know. —
Music can noble *hints* impart. —

There follows in this stanza, which is the third, a description of a subject very trite, Orpheus drawing the beasts about him. POPE shewed his superior judgment in taking no notice of this old story, and selecting a more new, as well as more striking incident, in the life of Orpheus. It was the custom of this time, for almost every rhymers to try his hand in an ode on St. Cecilia; we find many despicable rhapsodies, so called, in Tonson's Miscellanies. We have there also preserved another, and an earlier ode, of Dryden on this subject. One stanza of which I cannot forbear inserting in this note. It was set to music, 1687, by I. Baptista Draghi.

What

"men primo quam tertio," to use an expression of Quintilian. The first stanza is almost a perfect concert of itself; every different Instrument is described and illustrated, in numbers, that admirably represent, and correspond, to its different qualities and genius. The beginning of the second stanza, on the power which music exerts over the passions, is a little flat, and by no means equal to the conclusion of that stanza. The animating song that Orpheus sung to the Argonauts, copied from Valerius Flaccus, for that of Apollonius is of a different nature, is the happily chosen subject of the third. On hearing which,

Each,

What passion cannot music raise and quell!

When Jubal struck the chorded shell,

His list'ning brethren stood around,

And wondering on their faces fell,

To worship that celestial sound:

Less than a god they thought there could not dwell,

Within the hollow of that shell,

That spoke so sweetly and so well.

What passion cannot music raise and quell!

This is so complete and engaging a history-piece, that I knew a person of taste who was resolved to have it executed, if an artist could have been found, on one side of his saloon. In which case, said he, the painter has nothing to do, but to substitute colours for words, the design being finished to his hand. The reader doubtless observes the fine effect of the repetition of the last line; as well as the stroke of nature, in making these rude hearers imagine some god lay concealed in this first musician's instrument.

Each chief his sevenfold shield display'd,
And half unsheath'd the shining blade;

Which effects of the song, however lively, do not equal the force and spirit of what Dryden ascribes to the song of his Grecian artist; for when Timotheus cries out *REVENGE*, raises the furies, and calls up to Alexander's view a troop of Grecian ghosts that were slain and left unburied, inglorious and forgotten, each of them waving a torch in his hand, and pointing to the hostile temples of the Persians, and demanding vengeance of their prince, he instantly started from his throne,

— Seiz'd a flambeau with zeal to destroy,

while Thais and the attendant princes rushed out with him, to set fire to the city. The whole train of imagery in this stanza is alive, sublime, and animated to an unparallelled degree; the poet had so strongly possessed himself of the action described, that he places it fully before the eyes of the reader.

THE descent of Orpheus into hell is gracefully introduced in the fourth stanza, as it naturally flowed from the subject of the preceding one; the description of the infernal regions is well imagined, and the effects of the musician's lyre on the inhabitants of hell, are elegantly translated from the fourth Georgic
of

of Virgil *, and happily adapted to the subject in question. The supplicating song at the beginning of the fifth stanza, is highly pathetic and poetical, especially when he conjures the powers below,

By the hero's armed shades
Glittering through the gloomy glades,
By the youths that dy'd for love
Wand'ring in the myrtle grove;

These images are picturesque and appropriated; and these are such notes as might,

Draw iron tears down Pluto's cheek, †
And make hell grant what love did seek.

But the numbers that conclude this stanza are of so burlesque and ridiculous a kind, and have so much the air of a drinking song at a county election, that one is amazed and concerned to find them in a serious ode, and in an ode of a writer eminently skilled, in general, in accommodating his sounds to his sentiments.

Thus song could prevail
O'er death and o'er hell,
A conquest how hard and how glorious!
Tho' fate had fast bound her
With Styx nine times round her,
Yet music and love were victorious.

One

* Ver. 480. † Milton's Il Penseroso.

One would imagine that John Dennis, or some hero of the Dunciad, had been here attempting to travesty this description of the restoration of Eurydice to life. It is observable, that this is the very measure, Addison thought was proper to use in the comic character of Sir Trusty; by the introduction of which he has so strangely debased and degraded his opera of Rosamond.

How unhappy is he
That is ty'd to a she,
And fam'd for his wit and his beauty;
For of us pretty fellows,
Our wives are so jealous,
They ne'er have enough of our duty. *

These numbers therefore, according to Addison's ear, conveyed a low and ludicrous idea, instead of being expressive of triumph and exaltation, the images here intended to be impressed by POPE.

VIRGIL is again imitated throughout the sixth stanza, which describes the behaviour of Orpheus on the second loss of Eurydice. I wish POPE had inserted that striking circumstance, so strongly imagined, of a certain melancholy murmur, or rather dismal shriek, that was heard all around the lakes of Avernus, the moment Orpheus looked back on his wife;
——Terque

* ACT I. Scene II. See also, Scene IV. ACT I. A song of Grideline and Trusty. ACT III. Scene IV.

—Terque fragor stagnis auditus Avernis *.

And as *protopopoeias* are a great beauty in lyric poetry, surely he should not have omitted those natural and pathetic exclamations of Eurydice, the moment she was snatched back, and which she uttered as she was gradually sinking to the shades, especially where she movingly takes her last adieu,

Jamque vale! — — —

And adds, that she is now surrounded with a vast darkness, “feror ingenti circumdata nocte,” and in vain stretching out her feeble arms towards him,

Invalidasque tibi tendens, heu! non tua, palmas †.

This lively and pathetic attitude would have made a striking picture under the hands of POPE. The reader, I presume, feels the effect of the judicious placing in the verse, *heu! non tua*, and of its repetition after *tibi*. The places in which Orpheus, according to POPE, made his lamentations, are not so wild, so savage and dismal, as those mentioned by Virgil; to introduce him “beside the falls of fountains,” conveys not such an image of desolation and despair, as the caverns on the banks of Strymon and Tanais, the Hyperborean deserts, and the Riphæan solitudes. And to say of Hebrus, only, that
it

* Georgic. iv. 493.

† Ver. 498.

it "rolls in meanders," is flat and frigid, and does not heighten the melancholy of the place. There is an antithesis in the succeeding lines, "he *glows* amid "Rhodope's *snows*," which I hope the poet did not intend, as it would be a trivial and puerile conceit. The death of Orpheus is expressed with a beautiful brevity and abruptness, suitable to the nature of the ode ;

Hark ! Hæmus resounds with the Bacchanals cries,

Ah ! see he dies !

Yet ev'n in death Eurydice he *sung*.

Instead of *sung*, Virgil says *vocabat*, which is more natural and tender ; and Virgil adds a very moving epithet, that he called *miseram* Eurydicen. I am sensible POPE never intended an exact translation of the passages of the Georgics here alledged ; I only hint, that in my humble judgment, he has omitted some of the most striking incidents in the story. I have lately seen a manuscript ode, entitled, "On the "Use and Abuse of Poetry," in which Orpheus is considered in another, and a higher light, according to ancient mythology, as the first legislator and civilizer of mankind. I shall here insert a stanza of it, containing part of what relates to this subject.

A N T I S-

A N T I S T R O P H E II.

Such was the wise Orpheus' moral song,
 The lonely cliffs and caves among;
 From hollow oak, or mountain-den,
 He drew the naked, gazing men,
 Or where in turf-built theds, or rushy bowers,
 They shiver'd in cold wintry showers,
 Or sunk in heapy snows;
 Then sudden, while his melting music stole
 With powerful magic o'er each softening soul,
 Society, and law, and sacred order rose.

E P O D E II.

Father of peace and arts! he first the city built;
 No more the neighbour's blood was by his neighbour spilt;
 He taught to till, and separate the lands;
 He fix'd the roving youths in Hymen's myrtle bands;
 Whence dear domestic life began,
 And all the charities that soften'd man:
 The babes that in their fathers faces smil'd,
 With lisping blandishments their rage beguill'd,
 And tender thoughts inspir'd—&c.

I am not permitted to transcribe any more, and
 therefore return to POPE again.

THE beginning of the last stanza of the ode here
 examined, seems to be a repetition of the subject of
 the second, the power of music over the passions,

D

which

which may perhaps be reckoned a blameable tautology ; especially as these lines,

Musick the fiercest grief can charm,
And fate's severest rage disarm ;
Musick can soften pain to ease,
And make despair and madness please ;

are inferior, I am afraid, to the former on the same subjects, which contain beautiful and poetical personifications ;

Melancholy lifts her head,
Morpheus rouses from his bed,
Sloth unfolds her arms and wakes,
Lifting Envy drops her snakes ;
Intestine war no more our passions wage,
And giddy factions hear away their rage.

It is observable, that this ode of POPE, and the Alexander's Feast of Dryden, conclude with an epigram of four lines ; a species of wit as flagrantly unsuitable to the dignity, and as foreign to the nature, of the lyric, as it is of the epic muse.

It is to be regretted, that Mr. Handel has not set to music the former, as well as the latter, of these celebrated odes, in which he has displayed the combined powers of verse and voice, to a wonderful degree. No poem, indeed, affords so much various matter

matter for a composer to work upon; as Dryden has here introduced and expressed all the greater passions, and as the transitions from one to the other are sudden and impetuous. Of which we feel the effects, in the pathetic description of the fall of Darius, that immediately succeeds the joyous praises of Bacchus. The symphony, and air particularly, that accompanies the four words, "fallen, fallen, fallen, fallen," is strangely moving *, and consists of a few simple

D 2

and

* The mention of this pathetic air, reminds me of a story of the celebrated Lully, who having been one day accused of never setting any thing to music, but the languid verses of Quinault, was immediately animated with the reproach, and as it were seized with a kind of enthusiasm; he ran instantly to his harpsichord, and striking a few cords, sung in recitative these four lines in the Iphigenia of Racine, which are full of the strongest imagery, and are therefore much more difficult to express in music, than verses of mere sentiment,

Un prêtre environné d'une foule cruelle
Portera sur ma fille une main criminelle,
Dechirera son sein, et d'un œil curieux,
Dans son cœur palpitant consultera les dieux.

One of the company has often declared that they all thought themselves present at this dreadful spectacle, and that the notes with which Lully accompanied these words, erected the hair of their heads with horror.

The opinion of Boileau concerning music is remarkable; he asserts, qu'on ne peut jamais faire un bon opera; parceque la musique

and touching notes, without any of those intricate variations, and affected divisions, into which, in compliance with a vicious and vulgar taste, this great master hath sometimes descended. Even this piece of Handel, so excellent on the whole, is not free from one or two blemishes of this sort, particularly in the air, "With ravished ears," &c

THE moderns have perhaps practised no species of poetry with so little success, and with such indisputable inferiority to the ancients, as the ODE ; which seems owing to the harshness and untuneableness of modern languages, abounding in monosyllables, and crowded with consonants. This particularly is the case of the English, whose original is Teutonic, and which, therefore, is not so musical as the Italian, the Spanish, or even the French, as not having so great a quantity of words derived from the Latin. But the Latin language itself, as well as all others, must yield to the unparalleled sweetness and copiousness of the Greek. *Tantò est sermo græcus latino jocundior, says Quintilian, ut nostri poetæ, quoties dulce carmen esse voluerunt, illorum id nominibus exornent **."

What

musique ne sauroit narrer ; que les passions n'y peuvent être peinte dans toute l'étendue qu'elles demandent ; que d'ailleurs elle ne sauroit souvent mettre en chant les expressions vraiment sublimes et courageuses.

* He gives some instances that are curious and worth attention.

What line, even in the Italian poets, is so soft and mellifluous, as *

Αλλ' αἰεὶ ζεφυροῖο λιγυπνεύοντος ἄητας ?

Or as, in the tender Bion,

Διαζω τον Αδωνιν, απωλεῖς καλῶ Αδωνις,

to instance in no more ? If we cast a transient view over the most celebrated of the modern lyrics, we may observe, that the stanza of Petrarch, which has been adopted by all his successors, displeases the ear, by its tedious uniformity, and by the number of identical cadences. And indeed to speak truth, there appears to be little valuable in Petrarch, except the purity of his diction. His sentiments even of love, are metaphysical and far-fetched, neither is there much variety in his subjects, or fancy in his

D 3

method

tion. " Quid quod pleraque nos illa quasi mugiente literâ cludimus M, quâ nullum Græcè verbum cadit ? At illi Njucundam et in fine præcipuè quasi tinnientem, illius loco ponunt, quæ est apud nos rarissimè in clausulis. Quid quod syllabæ nostræ in B literam et D innituntur ? adèd asperè, ut plerique non antiquissimorum quidem, sed tamen veterum mollire tentaverint, non solum *aversa* pro *adversis* dicendo, sed et in præpositione B literæ absonam et ipsam S subjiciendo." Apply these observations with proper alterations to the English tongue. Quintil. l. xii. c. 10.

* Odyf. 4. 565.

method of treating them. Metastasio is a much better lyric poet. When Boileau attempted an ode, he exhibited a glaring proof of, what will be more fully insisted on in the course of this Essay, that the writer whose grand, characteristical talent is satyric or moral poetry, will never succeed, with equal merit, in the higher branches of his art. In his ode on the taking Namur, are instances of the * BOMBASTIC, of the PROSAIC, and of the PUERILE. And it is no small confirmation of the ruling passion of this author, that he could not conclude his ode, but with a severe stroke on his old antagonist Perrault, though the majesty of this species of compositions is so much injured by descending to personal satire. The name of Malherbe is respectable, as he was the first reformer of the French poesy, and the first who gave his countrymen any idea of a legitimate ode, though his own pieces have hardly any thing but harmony to recommend

* An instance of the FIRST, is to be found in the third stanza. Of the SECOND, in the ninth stanza,

Qui domta Lille, Coutrai,
Gand, la superbe Espagnole,
Saint Ormer, Bezançon, Dole,
Ypres, Mastricht, et Cambrai.

Of the third sort, is, his making a star or comet, fatal to his enemies, of the white feather, which the king usually wore in his hat.

mend them. The Odes of la Motte, are fuller of delicate sentiment, and philosophical reflection, than of imagery, figures, and poetry. There are particular stanzas eminently good, but not one entire ode. Some of Rousseau, particularly that to Fortune, and some of his psalms; and one or two of Voltaire, particularly, to the king of Prussia, on his accession to the throne, and on Maupertuis's travels to the north, to measure the degrees of the meridian towards the equator, seem to arise above that correct mediocrity, which distinguishes the lyric poetry of the French. In this ode of Voltaire, we find a proso-poeia of Americus, and afterwards a speech of Newton, on the design of this traveller and his companions, that approach to the sublime,

Comme ils parloient ainsi, Newton dans l'empirée,
 Newton les regardoit, et du ciel entr'ouvert
 Confirmez, disoit il, a la terre éclairée
 Ce que j'ai decouvert.

I hope I shall not transgress a very sensible observation of POPE, who would have a true critic be

Still pleas'd to praise, yet not afraid to blame,

if I should say, we have lately seen two or three lyric pieces, superior to any he has left us; I mean an Ode on Lyric Poetry, and another to Lord Huntingdon, by Dr. Akenfide; and a Chorus of British

Bards, by Mr. Gilbert West, at the end of the Institution of the Order of the Garter. Both these are written with regular returns of the Strophe, Antistrophe, and Epode, which give a truly Pindaric variety to the numbers, that is wanting not only to the best French and Italian, but even to the best Latin odes. In the pieces here commended, the figures are strong, and the transitions bold, and there is a just mixture of sentiment and imagery; and particularly, they are animated with a noble spirit of liberty. I must refer the reader to the characters of Alcæus and of Milton in the two first, and to the stanza of Mr. West's ode, on the barons procuring magna charta, which I shall insert at length.

On yonder plain,
 Along whose willow-fringed side
 The silver-footed Naiads, sportive train,
 Down the smooth Thames amid the cygnets glide,
 I saw, when at thy reconciling word,
 Injustice, anarchy, intestine jarr,
 Despotic insolence, the wasting sword,
 And all the brazen throats of civil war
 Were hush'd in peace; from his imperious throne
 Hurl'd furious down,
 Abash'd, dismay'd,
 Like a chas'd lion to the savage shade
 Of his own forests fell Oppression fled,
 With vengeance brooding in his sullen breast.
 Then Justice fearless rais'd her decent head,
 Heal'd every grief, each wrong redrest;
 While round her valiant squadrons stood,
 And bade her awful tongue demand,

From

From vanquish'd John's reluctant hand,
The DEED OF FREEDOM purchas'd with their blood *.

The next LYRIC compositions of POPE, are two choruses inserted in a very heavy tragedy altered from Shakespear by the Duke of Buckingham; in which we see, that the most accurate observation of dramatic rules without genius is of no effect. These choruses are extremely elegant and harmonious; but are they not chargeable with the fault, which Aristotle imputes to many of Euripides, that they are foreign and adventitious to the subject, and contribute nothing towards the advancement of the main action? Whereas the chorus ought, “ *Μοριον ειναι τε ολκς, και συναγωνιζεσθαι* * , to be a part or member of the Whole, coöperate with it, and help to accelerate the intended event; as is constantly, adds the philosopher, the practice of Sophocles. Whereas these reflections of POPE on the baneful influences of war, on the arts and learning, and on the universal power of love, seem to be too general, are not sufficiently appropriated, do not rise from the subject and occasion, and might be inserted with equal propriety in twenty other tragedies. This remark of Aristotle, though he does not himself produce any examples, may be verified from the following, among many

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others,

* Doddsley's Miscellanies, vol. ii. pag. 152. See also in the same volume, an excellent ode of Mr. Cobb.

† Κεφ. iii. περι ποντικης.

others. In the Phœnicians of Euripides, they sing a long and very beautiful, but ill placed, hymn to Mars; I speak of that which begins so nobly,

Ω πολυμοχθῶ Αρης, τι ποθ' αιματι
Και θανατω κατεχνη, βρομικ παραμυθος εορτας*;

“ O direful Mars! why art thou still delighted with
“ blood and with death, and why an enemy to the
“ feasts of Bacchus?” And a still more glaring instance may be brought from the end of the third act of the Troades, in which the story of Ganymede is introduced not very artificially †. To these may be added that exquisite ode in praise of Apollo, descriptive of his birth and victories, which we find in the Iphigenia in Tauris ‡.

ON the other hand, the choruses of Sophocles never desert the subject of each particular drama, and all their sentiments and reflections are drawn from the situation of the principal personage of the fable. Nay Sophocles hath artfully found a method of making those poetical descriptions, with which the choruses of the ancients abound, carry on the chief design of the piece; and has by these means accomplished what is a great difficulty in writing tragedy, has united poetry with propriety. In the § Philoctetes the chorus takes

* Ver. 793.

† Ver. 795.

‡ Ver. 1235. et seq.

§ The subject and scene of this tragedy, so romantic and uncommon,

takes a natural occasion, at verse 694, to give a minute and moving picture of the solitary life of that unfortunate hero; and when afterwards at verse 855, pain has totally exhausted the strength and spirits of Philoctetes, and it is necessary for the plot of the tragedy that he should fall asleep, it is then, that the chorus breaks out into an exquisite ode to sleep. As in the *Antigone*, with equal beauty and decorum in an address to the god of love, at verse 791 of that play. And thus lastly, when the birth of *Oedipus* is doubtful, and his parents unknown, the chorus suddenly exclaims, “*Τίς σέ, τέκνον, τίς σ’ εἰκλε των μακραίωνων*; &c. From which, O my son, of the immortal gods, didst thou spring? Was it some nymph, a favourite of Pan, that haunts the mountains; or some daughter of Apollo, for this god loves the remote rocks and caverns, who bore you? Or was it Mercury who reigns in Cyllene; or did Bacchus, *Θεὸς ναιῶν ἐπ’ ἀκρῶν ὄρεων*, a god who dwells on the tops of the mountains, beget you, on any of the nymphs that possess Helicon, with whom he frequently sports?” *

THE uncommon, are highly pleasing to the imagination. See particularly his description of his being left in this desolate island, v. 280. His lamentation for the loss of his bow, v. 1140. and also 1185. and his last adieu to the island, 1508. One may here observe by the way, that the ancients thought bodily pains, and wounds, &c. proper objects to be represented on the stage.

* *Οἶδ. τυραν.* 1118.

THE judicious author of the tragedy of *Elfrida*, hath given occasion to a kind of controversy among the more curious critics, concerning the utility of the chorus, which, after the model of the ancients, he hath endeavoured to revive. To imagine, that the great Grecian masters retained it only out of respect to its antiquity, and from no intrinsic valuableness or propriety of the thing, can scarcely be imagined. The sentiments of the excellent *Brumoy* are moderate and rational, and seem to comprehend all that is necessary to be said on this subject. "I know, says he, the chorus is attended with inconveniencies. *Sophocles* had the address to withdraw his chorus for a few moments, when their absence was necessary, - as in the *Ajax*. If the chorus therefore incommodes the poet, and puts him under difficulties, he must charge it solely to his own want of dexterity. What advantage, on the other hand, may he not reap, from a body of actors that fill the stage; that render more lively, striking, and sensible, the continuity of the action, and give it the air of greater PROBABILITY? For it is not natural or conceivable, that a great and illustrious action, such as a revolution in a state, should pass without witnesses. We perceive and feel a kind of void on the stage, on account of the absence of the choruses; and the successful attempt of *Racine*, who adopted and revived the use of them in his *ATHALIA* and *ESTHER*, were sufficient, one would imagine, to undeceive

undeceive and convince us, of their importance, and utility. The ancients treated only of such stories as were publicly transacted; now the banishment of the chorus has been the necessary consequence of the custom of the moderns, in taking for their Representations all kinds of subjects, and in filling and overcharging the action with incidents and surprises. For how could these various crowded events and incidents, have been possibly introduced in a public place, exposed to the view of courtiers and the people; while the generality of our tragedies turn on particular and private affairs, removed from the view and notice of all men? The Athenian spectators were ever accustomed to concern themselves in all public affairs, and to be witnesses and judges of them. The modern stage, by its disuse of the chorus, may perhaps have gained a great number of fine subjects for tragedy; yet, in return, it is burthened with confidents, it loses the continuity of action, and is deprived of the magnificent spectacle that serves to support that continuity, and which is, if I may be allowed the expression, *le fonds, ou l'accompagnement du tableau* *."

I THOUGHT it more equitable, as well as more convincing, to quote at large the words of this admirable critic, whose work is one of the most valuable that his elegant nation hath produced, than to adopt,

* Le Theatre de Grecs. Tom. i. 104. and 214. and 198.

adopt, as some have done with small variations, his opinion, without acknowledging the debt. An apology would be necessary for this digression, if it was not my professed design in this Essay, to expatiate into such occasional disquisitions, as naturally arise from the subject; it has however kept us too long from surveying a valuable literary curiosity, I mean the earliest production of POPE, written when he was not twelve years old, his ODE ON SOLITUDE.

THE first sketches of such an artist ought highly to be prized. Different geniuses unfold themselves at different periods of life. In some minds the ore is a long time in ripening. Not only inclination, but opportunity and encouragement, a proper subject, or a proper patron, influence the exertion or the suppression of genius. These stanzas on Solitude, are a strong instance of that contemplative and moral turn, which was the distinguishing characteristic of our poet's mind. An ode of Cowley which he produced at the age of thirteen years, is of the same cast, and perhaps not in the least inferior to this of POPE. The voluminous Lopez de Vega, is commonly, but I fear incredibly, reported by the Spaniards, to have composed verses when he was * five years old; and Torquato Tasso, the second of the Italian poets, for that wonderful original Dante is the first, is said to have

* It is a certain fact, that S. Bononcini composed and performed an opera, when he was but nine years old.

have recited poems and orations of his own writing, when he was seven. It is however certain, which is more extraordinary, that he produced his *Rinaldo* in his eighteenth year, no bad precursor to the *Gierusalem Liberata*, and no small effort of that genius, which was in due time to shew, how fine an epic poem the Italian language, notwithstanding the vulgar imputation of effeminacy, was capable of supporting.

THOSE who are fond of biographical anecdotes, which are some of the most amusive and instructive parts of history, will be perhaps pleased with the following particulars in the life of POPE. He frequently declared, that the time of his beginning to write verses, was so very early in his life, that he could scarcely recall it to his memory. When he was yet a child, his father, who had been a merchant in London, and retired to Binfield with about twenty thousand pounds, would frequently order him to make English verses. It seems he was difficult to be pleased, and would make the lad correct them again and again. When at last he approved them, he took great pleasure in perusing them, and would say, "these are good RHYMES." These early praises of a tender and respected parent, cooperating with the natural inclination of the son, might possibly be the causes that fixed our young bard in a resolution of becoming eminent in this art. He was taught to
read

read very early by an aunt ; and of his own indefatigable industry learned to write, by copying printed books, which he executed with great neatness and accuracy. When he was eight years old, he was put under the direction of one Taverner, a priest, who taught him the rudiments of the latin and greek tongues together. About this time he accidentally met with Ogilby's translation of Homer, which, notwithstanding the deadness and insipidity of the versification, arrested his attention by the force of the story. The Ovid of Sandys fell next in his way ; and it is said, that the raptures these translations gave him were so strong, that he spoke of them with pleasure to the period of his life. About ten, being now at school at Hide-park corner, whither he went from a popish seminary at Twiford, near Winchester, he was carried sometimes to the play-house ; and being struck, we may imagine, with theatrical representations, he turned the chief events into a kind of play, made up of a number of speeches from Ogilby's translation, connected with verses of his own. He persuaded the upper boys to act this piece, which, from its curiosity, one would have been glad to have beheld. The master's gardener represented the character of Ajax ; and the actors were dressed after the pictures of his favourite Ogilby, far the best part of that book, as they were designed and engraved by artists of note. At twelve, he retired with his father into Windsor-Forest ; and it was there he first perused

ruſed the writings of Waller, of Spenſer, and of Dryden. Spenſer is ſaid to have made a poet of Cowley; that Ogilby ſhould give our author his firſt poetic pleaſures, is a remarkable circumſtance. On the firſt ſight of Dryden he abandoned the reſt, having now found an author, whoſe caſt was exactly congenial with his own. His works therefore he ſtudied with equal pleaſure and attention: he placed them before his eyes as a model; of which more will be ſaid in the courſe of theſe papers. He copied not only his harmonious verſification, but the very turns of his periods. It was hence he was enabled to give to rhyme all the harmony of which it is capable.

About this time, when he was * fifteen years old, he began to write his *ALCANDER*, an epic poem, of which he himſelf ſpeaks with ſo much amiable frankneſs and ingenuity, in a paſſage reſtored to the excellent preface before his works. “ I confeſs there was a time when I was in love with myſelf, and my firſt productions were the children of ſelf-love upon innocence. I had made an epic poem, and panegyrics on all the princes of Europe, and I thought myſelf the greateſt genius that ever was. I cannot but regret theſe delightful viſions of my childhood, which, like
the

* Nec placet ante annos vates puer: omnia juſto

Tempore proveniant. — — — Vidæ Poet. l. 1.

the fine colours we see when our eyes are shut, are vanished for ever." Atterbury had perused this early piece, and we may gather from one of his letters, advised him to burn it; though he adds, "I would have interceded for the first page, and put it, with your leave, among my curiosities." I have been credibly informed, that some of the anonymous verses, quoted as examples of the *Art of Sinking in Poetry*, in the incomparable satire so called, were such as our poet remembered from his own ALCANDER. So sensible of its own errors and imperfections is a mind truly great.

QUINTILIAN, whose knowledge of human nature was consummate, has observed, that nothing quite correct and faultless, is to be expected in very early years, from a truly elevated genius: that a generous extravagance and exuberance are its proper marks, and that a premature exactness is a certain evidence of future flatness and sterility. His words are incomparable, and worthy consideration *.

"Audeat hæc ætas plura, et INVENIAT, et inventis gaudeat, sint licet illa non satis interim sicca et severa. Facile remedium est ubertatis, sterilia nullo labore vincuntur. Illa mihi in pueris natura nimium spei dabit, in quâ INGENIUM judicio præsumitur. Materiam esse primum volo vel abundantiorē, atque

* Lib. 2. Institut. Cap. 4. ad init.

que ultra quam oportet fufam. Multum inde deco-
 quent anni, multum ratio limabit, aliquid velut ufu
 ipfo deteretur, fit modo unde excidi poffit et quod ex-
 culpi: erit autem, fi non ab initio tenuem lami-
 nam duxerimus, et quam cælatura altior rumpat.
 — Quare mihi ne maturitas quidem ipfa feftinet,
 nec mufta in lacu ftatim auftera fint; fic et annos
 ferent, et vetuftate proficient.” This is very ftrong
 and mafculine fense, expreffed and enlivened by
 a train of metaphors, all of them elegant, and
 well preferved. Whether thefe early productions of
 POPE, would not have appeared to Quintilian to be
 rather too finifhed, correct, and pure, and what he
 would have inferred concerning them, is too delicate
 a fubject for me to enlarge upon. Let me rather add
 an entertaining anecdote. When Guido and Dome-
 nichino had each of them painted a picture in the
 church of Saint Andrew, Annibal Carrache, their
 mafter, was preffed to declare, which of his two pu-
 pils had excelled. The picture of Guido reprefented
 Saint Andrew on his knees before the crofs; that of
 Domenichino reprefented the flagellation of the fame
 apoftle. Both of them in their different kinds were
 capital pieces, and were painted in frefco, oppofite
 each other, to eternize, as it were, their rivalfhip and
 contention. Guido, faid Carrache, has performed as
 a mafter, and Domenichino as a fcholar. But, ad-
 ded he, the work of the fcholar is more valuable than
 that of the mafter. In truth, one may perceive faults
 in

in the picture of Domenichino that Guido has avoided; but then there are noble strokes, not to be found in that of his rival. It was easy to discern a genius that promised to produce beauties, to which the sweet, the gentle, and the graceful Guido would never aspire.

THE last piece that belongs to this section, is the ODE entitled, THE DYING CHRISTIAN TO HIS SOUL, written in imitation of the well known sonnet of Hadrian, addressed to his departing spirit; concerning which it was our author's judicious opinion, that the diminutive epithets with which it abounds, such as Vagula, Blandula, were by no means expressions of levity and indifference, but rather of endearment, of tenderness and concern. This ode was written we find at the desire of Steel; and our poet in a letter to him on that occasion, says— "You have it, as Cowley calls it, just warm from the brain; it came to me the first moment I waked this morning; yet you'll see, it was not so absolutely inspiration, but that I had in my head, not only the verses of Hadrian, but the fine fragment of Sappho." *

IT

* In Longinus, sect. 10. quoted by him, as a model of that Sublime which combines together many various and opposite passions and sensations," *ἵνα μὴ ἐν τῇ παλῶς φαινηταῖς, παθῶν δὲ ΣΥΝΟΔΟΣ.*"

It is possible however, that our author might have had another composition in his head, besides those he here refers to ; for there is a close and surprising resemblance * between this ode of POPE, and one of an obscure and forgotten rhymers of the age of Charles the second, namely Thomas Flatman; from whose dunghill, as well as from the dregs of † Crashaw, of Carew, of Herbert, and others, (for it is well known he was a great reader of all those poets) POPE has very judiciously collected gold. And the following stanza is perhaps the only valuable one Flatman † has produced.

When on my sick bed I languish,
Full of sorrow, full of anguish,
Fainting, gasping, trembling, crying,
Panting, groaning, speechless, dying,
Methinks I hear some gentle spirit say,
Be not fearful, come away!

The third and fourth lines are eminently good and pathetic,

* See THE ADVENTURER, vol. II. 2. ed. p. 230.

† Crashaw has very well translated the dies iræ, to which translation Roscommon is much indebted, in his Poem on the the day of Judgment.

‡ Of whom says Lord Rochester,
Not that slow drudge in swift Pindaric strains,
Flatman, who Cowley imitates with pains,
And rides a jaded muse whipt with loose reins.

thetic, and the climax well preserved ; the very turn of them is closely copied by P O P E ; as is likewise the striking circumstance of the dying man's imagining he hears a voice calling him away ;

Vital spark of heavenly flame
Quit, O quit, this mortal frame ;
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
O the pain, the bliss of dying !
Hark ! they whisper ! angels say,
Sister spirit, come away !

I AM sensible of the difficulty of distinguishing resemblances from thefts ; and of what a late critic has urged, that a want of seeming originality arises frequently, not from a barrenness and timidity of genius, but from invincible necessity, and the nature of things : that the works of those who profess an art, whose essence is imitation, must needs be stamped with a close resemblance to each other, since the objects material or animate, extraneous or internal, which they all imitate, lie equally open to the observation of all, and are perfectly similar. Descriptions therefore that are faithful and just, MUST BE UNIFORM AND ALIKE ; the first copier may be perhaps entitled to the praise of priority, but a succeeding one ought not certainly to be condemned for plagiarism.

THESE general observations, however true, do not,
I think,

I think, extend to the case before us, because not only the thoughts, but even the words are copied ; and because the images, especially the last, are such, as are not immediately impressed by sensible objects, and which therefore on account of their SINGULARITY, did not lie in common for any poet to seize. Let us however moderate the matter, and say what perhaps is the real fact, that POPE fell into the thoughts of Flatman unawares, and without design ; and having formerly read him, imperceptibly adopted this passage, even without knowing that he had borrowed it. That this will frequently happen, is evident from the following curious particulars related by Menage, which, because much has been said of late on this head by many writers of criticism, I shall here insert. “ I have often heard M. Chapelain, and Mr. Dandilly declare, that they wrote the following line,

D'arbitres de la paix, de foudres de la guerre ;

without knowing it was in Malherbe ; and the moment I am making this remark, recollect that the same thing happened to M. Furetiere. I have often heard Corneille declare, that he inserted in his Polyucte, two celebrated lines concerning fortune, without knowing they were the property of M. Godeau bishop of Vence ;

Et

Et comme elle a l' éclat du Verre

Elle en a la fragilité—

Godeau had inserted them in an ode to Cardinal Richlieu, fifteen years before Polyeucte was written. Porphyry in a fragment of his book on Philology, quoted by Eusebius, in the tenth book of his *Evangelical preparation*, makes mention of an author named Aretades, who composed an entire treatise on this sort of resemblances.—And St Jerom relates, that his preceptor Donatus, explaining that sensible passage in Terence, “ Nihil est dictum quod non sit dictum prius,” railed severely at the ancients, for taking from him his best thoughts ; “ Pereant qui ante nos, nostra dixerunt.”*

MENAGE makes these observations on occasion of a passage in the Poetics of Vida, intended to justify borrowing the thoughts and even expressions of others, which passage is very applicable to the subject before us :

Aspice ut exuvias, veterumque insignia, nobis
Aptemus ; rerum accipimus nunc clara reperta,
Nunc seriem atq; animum verborum, verba quoque ipsa ;
Nec pudet interdum alterius nos ore locutos. †

Menage adds, that he intended to compile a regular treatise

* Anti-Baillet, tom. ii. pag. 207.

† Lib. iii. v. 255.

treatise on the thefts and imitations of the poets. As his reading was very extensive, his work would probably have been very entertaining. For surely it is no trivial amusement, to trace an applauded sentiment or description to its source, and to remark, with what * judgment and art it is adapted and inserted; provided this be done with such a spirit of modesty and candour, as evidently shews, the critic intends merely to gratify curiosity, and not to indulge envy, malignity, and a petulant desire of dethroning established † reputations. Thus, for instance, says the Rambler, “ It can scarcely be doubted, that in the first of the following passages POPE remembered OVID, and that in the second ‡ he copied CRASHAW, because there is a concurrence of more resemblances, than can be imagined to have happened by chance.

Sæpe pater dixit, studium quid inutile tentas?

Mæonides nullas ipse reliquit opes —

Sponte sua carmen numeros veniebat ad aptos,

Et quod conabar scribere, versus erat. OVID.

I left no calling for this idle trade,

No duty broke, no father disobey'd;

E

While

* Dryden says prettily of Ben. Jonson's many imitations of the ancients, “ You track him every where in their snow.”

† See the fruitless and impudent attack of Lauder on Milton.

‡ The Works of Cardinal Bembo, and of Casa, of Annibal Caro, and Tasso himself, are full of entire lines taken from Dante and Petrarch.

ESSAY ON THE GENIUS

While yet a child, ere yet a fool to fame,
I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came. POPE.

—— This plain floor,
Believe me, reader, can say more
Than many a braver marble can,
Here lies a truly honest man. CRASHAW.

This modest stone, what few vain marbles can,
May truly say, " here lies an honest man." POPE.*

Two other critics have also remarked some farther remarkable coincidences of POPE's thought and expressions, with those of other writers, which are here inserted, as they cannot fail of entertaining the curious.

Pride, malice, folly, against Dryden rose
In various shapes of parsons, critics, beaux. POPE.

L'ignorance, et l'erreur a ses naissantes pieces †,
En habits de marquis, en robes de comtesses,
Venoient pour diffamer son chef-d-oeuvre nouveau.
BOILEAU.

Superior beings when of late they saw,
A mortal man unfold all nature's law ;
Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And shew'd a Newton as we shew an ape. POPE.

Simia cœlicolum risusque jocusque deorum est,
Tunc

* Rambler, No. 143.

† Of Moliere

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 75

Tunc homo, quum temerè ingenio confidit, et audet
Abdita naturæ scrutari, arcanæque divum.

PALINGENIUS.

— — — Happily to steer
From grave to gay, from lively to severe. — POPE.

— — — D'une voix legere
Passer du grave au doux, du plaisant au severe.

BOILEAU.

The conclusion of the epitaph on Gay, where he observes, that his honour consists not in being entombed among kings and heroes,

But that the worthy and the good may say,
Striking their pensive bosoms, *here* lies GAY,

is adopted from an old Latin elegy on the death of prince Henry. This conceit of his friend's being enshrined in the hearts of the virtuous, is, by the way one of the most forced and far-fetched, that POPE has fallen into *.

JONSON, as another critic has remarked, wrote an elegy on the lady Anne Pawlet, Marchioness of Winton; the beginning of which POPE seems to have thought of, when he wrote his verses, to the memory of an unfortunate lady. Jonson begins his elegy,

E 2

What

* The Adventurer, No. 63.

What gentle ghost, besprent with April dew,
 Hayles me so solemnly to yonder yew †
 And beckoning woes me—— *

In which strain P O P E beautifully breaks out;—

What beck'ning ghost along the moonlight shade,
 Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade? —
 'Tis she! ———

As Jonson now lies before me, I may perhaps be
 pardoned for pointing out another passage in him,
 which P O P E probably remembered, when he wrote
 the following :

From shelves to shelves, see greedy Vulcan roll,
 And lick up all their physic of the soul † ;

Thus Jonson, speaking of a parcel of books,

These, hadst thou pleas'd either to dine or sup,
 Had made a meale for Vulcan to lick up ‡.

I SHOULD be sensibly touched at the injurious
 imputation of so ungenerous, and indeed impotent
 a design, as that of attempting to diminish, or fully
 the reputation of so valuable a writer as P O P E, by
 the

* In the Underwood.

† Dunciad.

‡ See OBSERVATIONS on the FAERIE QUEEN of Spencer,
 by Thomas Warton, sect. vii. p. 166.

the most distant hint, of accusation of his being a plagiarist; a writer, to whom the English poetry and the English language is everlastingly indebted. But we may say of his imitations, what his poetical father Dryden said of another, who deserved not such a panegyric so justly as our author: "HE INVADES
 "AUTHORS, LIKE A MONARCH, AND WHAT
 "WOULD BE THEFT IN OTHER POETS, IS
 "ONLY VICTORY IN HIM *." For indeed he never works on the same subject with another, without heightening the piece with more masterly strokes, and a more artful pencil. And, as was observed of Augustus, what he finds merely coarse brick, he leaves magnificent marble. Those who flattered themselves, that they should diminish the reputation of Boileau, by printing, in the manner of a commentary at the bottom of each page of his works, the many lines he has borrowed from Horace and Juvenal, were grossly deceived. The verses of the ancients, which this poet hath turned into French with so much address, and which he hath happily made so homogeneous, and of a piece with the rest of the work, that every thing seems to have been conceived in a continued train of thought, by the very same person, confer as much honour on M. Despreaux, as the verses which are purely his own. The original

E 3

turn

* On Dram. poetry, p. 61.

turn which he gives to his translations, * the boldness of his expressions, so little forced and unnatural, that they seem to be born, as it were, with his thoughts, display almost as much invention, as the first production of a thought entirely new. This induced La Bruyere to say, “ que Despreaux paroissoit creer les “ pensees d'autrui.” Both he and POPE might have answered their † accusers, in the words with which Virgil is said to have replied, to those who accused him of borrowing all that was valuable in his *Æneid* from Homer; “ CUR NON ILLIQUOQUE EADEM
FURTA TENTARENT? VERUM INTELLECTU-
ROS, FACILIUS ESSE HERCULI CLAVUM,
QUAM HOMERO VERSUM, SURRIPERE. ‡”

S E C T.

* Il y a du mérite a faire une pareil larcin parcequ' on ne sçauroit le faire bien sans peine, et sans avoir du moins le talent de l'expression. Il faut autant d'industrie pour y réussir qu'il en falloit a Lacedemone, pour fair un larcin un-galand homme. Ces pensees transplantées d'une langue dans un autre ne peuvent réussir que entre les mains de ceux qui du moins ont le don de l'invention des termes. Ainsi lorsqu' elles réussissent, la moitié de leur beauté appartient a celui qui les a remises en œuvre. Du Bos, Reflexions critiques. Section viii. vol. 2.

† The Jesuits that wrote the journals of Trevoux strongly object plagiarism to Boileau.

‡ Donat. In Vit. Virgil.

S E C T. III.

Of the ESSAY on Criticism.

WE are now arrived at a poem of that species, for which our author's genius was particularly turned, the DIDACTIC and the MORAL; it is therefore, as might be expected, a master-piece in its kind. I have been sometimes inclined to think, that the praises Addison has bestowed on it, were a little partial and invidious. "The observations, says he, follow one another, like those in Horace's Art of Poetry, without that methodical regularity which would have been requisite in a prose writer *." It is however certain, that the poem before us is by no means destitute of a just integrity, and a lucid order: each of the precepts and remarks naturally introduce the succeeding ones so as to form an entire whole. The ingenious Mr. Hurd, hath also usefully shewn, that Horace observed a strict method, and unity of design, in his epistle to the Pisones, and that altho' the connexions are delicately fine and almost imperceptible, like the secret hinges of a well wrought box, yet they artfully and closely unite each part together, and give coherence, uniformity, and beauty to the work. The Spectator adds; "The observa-

E 4

" tions

* Spectator, No. 253.

"tions in this essay are *some* of them uncommon ;" there is, I fear, a small mixture of ill-nature in these words ; for this ESSAY, tho' on a beaten subject, abounds in many new remarks, and original rules, as well as in many happy and beautiful illustrations, and applications, of the old ones. We are indeed amazed to find such a knowledge of the world, such a maturity of judgment, and such a penetration into human nature, as are here displayed, in so very young a writer as was POPE, when he produced this ESSAY ; for he was not twenty years old. Correctness and a just taste, are usually not attained but by long practice and experience in any art ; but a clear head, and strong sense were the characteristical qualities of our author ; and every man soonest displays his radical excellencies. If his predominant talent be warmth and vigour of imagination, it will break out in fanciful and luxuriant descriptions, the colouring of which will perhaps be too rich and glowing. If his chief force lies in the understanding rather than in the imagination, it will soon appear by solid and manly observations on life or learning, expressed in a more chaste and subdued style. The former will frequently be hurried into obscurity or turgidity, and a false grandeur of diction ; the latter will seldom hazard a figure, whose usage is not already established, or an image beyond common life ; will always be perspicuous if not elevated ; will never disgust, if not transport, his readers ; will
avoid

avoid the grosser faults, if not arrive at the greater beauties of composition; The “eloquentiæ genus,” for which he will be distinguished, will not be the “plenum et erectum, et audax, et præcellum,” but the “pressum, et mite, et limatum*.” In the earliest letters of POPE to Wycherley, to Walsh, and Cromwell, we find many admirable and acute judgments of men and books, and an intimate acquaintance not only with some of the best Greek and Roman, particularly the latter, but the most celebrated of the French and Italian classics.

Du Bos† fixes the period of time, at which, generally speaking, the poets and the painters have arrived at as high a pitch of perfection, as their geniuses will permit, to be the age of thirty years, or a few years more or less. Virgil was near thirty when he composed his first Eclogue. Horace was a grown man when he began to be talked of at Rome as a poet, having been formerly engaged in a busy military life. Racine was about the same age when his ANDROMACHE, which may be regarded as his first good tragedy, was played. Corneille was more than thirty when his CID appeared. Despréaux was full thirty when he published his satires, such as we now have them. Molière was full forty when he wrote the first

E 5

of

* Quintil. l. xi. c. 1.

† Sect. x. 2.

of those comedies, on which his reputation is founded. But to excell in this species of composition, it was not sufficient for Moliere to be only a great poet ; it was rather necessary for him to gain a thorough knowledge of men and the world, which is seldom attained so early in life ; but without which, the best poet would be able to write but very indifferent comedies. Congreve however was but nineteen when he wrote his *Old Bachelor*. Raphael was about thirty years old when he displayed the beauty and sublimity of his genius in the Vatican : for it is there we behold the first of his works, that are worthy the great name he at present so deservedly possesses. When Shakespear wrote his *LEAR*, Milton his *PARADISE LOST*, Spenser his *FAIRY QUEEN*, and Dryden his *MUSIC ODE*, they had all exceeded the middle age of man.

FROM this short review it appears, that few poets ripened so early as POPE ; who seems literally and strictly to have fulfilled the precepts of Horace in each of its circumstances ;

Multa tulit, fecitque Puer ;

he was laborious and indefatigable in his pursuits of learning ;

— — — Sudavit et alsit ;

and

and above all, what is of the greatest consequence in preserving each faculty of the mind in due vigour,

Abstinuit venere et vino, —

These are the two temptations to which a youthful bard is principally subject, and into whose snares he generally falls. If the imagination be lively, the passions will be strong. True genius seldom resides in a cold and phlegmatic constitution. The same temperament, and the same sensibility that makes a poet or a painter, will be apt to make a man a lover and a debauchee. POPE was happily secured from these common failings, the bane of so many others, by the weakness and delicacy of his body and the bad state of his health. The sensual vices were too violent for so tender a frame; he never deviated into a course of intemperance and dissipation. May I add, that even his bodily make was of use to him as a writer; for one who was acquainted with the heart of man, and the secret springs of our actions, has observed with great penetration; “ * It is good to consider deformity, not as a signe, which is more deceivable, but as a cause, which seldom faileth of the effect. Whosoever hath any thing fixed in his person that doth

* Bacon's Essays, xliv.

doth induce contempt, hath also a perpetual spur in himself, to rescue and deliver himself from scorn." I do not think it improbable, that this circumstance might animate our poet, to double his diligence to make himself distinguished; and hope I shall not be accused, by those who have a knowledge of human nature, of assigning his desire of excellence to a motive too mean and sordid, as well as too weak and inefficacious to operate such an effect.

What crops of wit and honesty appear,
From spleen, from obstinacy, hate or fear!
See anger, zeal and fortitude supply,
Ev'n avarice, prudence; sloth, philosophy;
Nor virtue male or female can we name,
But what will grow on pride or grow on shame*.

It was another circumstance equally propitious to the studies of POPE, in this early part of his life, that he inherited a fortune that was a decent competence, and sufficient to supply the small expences, which both by constitution and reflection he required. He had no occasion to distract his thoughts by being solicitous, "de l'odice paranda;" he needed not to wait,

— Pour diner, le succès d'un sonnet †.

His father retired from business, at the revolution, to
a little

* Essay on Man, ep. ii. v. 185. † Boileau, Art Poet. c. 4.

a little convenient box, at Binfield, near Oakingham, in Berkshire *; and having converted his effects into money, is said to have brought with him into the country almost twenty thousand pounds. As he was a papist he could not purchase, nor put his money to interest on real security; and as he adhered to the interests of King James, he made a point of conscience not to lend it to the new government.

For right hereditary tax'd and fin'd,
He stuck to poverty with peace of mind:

he therefore kept this sum in his chest, and lived upon the principal; till by that time his son came to the succession, a great part of it was consumed. There was however enough left to supply the occasions of our author, † and to keep him from the two most destructive enemies to a young genius, want and dependence.

* See WORKS, vol. 4. 212.

† He afterwards acquired a considerable fortune by his translation of the Iliad, which was published for his own benefit, by a subscription so large, that it does honour to this Kingdom. Mr. Warburton informs us, that he sold it to Lintot the Bookseller, on the following terms; twelve hundred pounds paid down, and all the books for his subscribers. The Odyssey was published in the same manner, and sold on the same conditions, except only, that instead of twelve, he had but six hundred pounds. He was assisted in this latter work, by Broome and Fenton, to the first of whom he gave six hundred pounds, and to the latter, three hundred. This translation has proved a good estate to the bookseller.

dependence. "I can easily conceive, says a late moralist, that a mind occupied and overwhelmed with the weight and immensity of its own conceptions, *glancing with astonishing rapidity from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven*, cannot willingly submit to the dull drudgery, of examining the justness and accuracy of a butcher's bill. To descend from the widest and comprehensive views of nature, and weigh out hops for a brewing, must be invincibly disgusting to a true genius; to be able to build imaginary palaces of the most exquisite architecture, but yet not to pay a carpenter's bill, is a cutting mortification and disgrace *."

ON the other hand, opulence and high station would be equally pernicious and unfavourable to a young genius; as they would almost unavoidably embarrass and immerse him, in the cares, the pleasures, the indolence, and the dissipation, that accompany abundance. And perhaps the fortune most truly desirable, and the situation most precisely proper for a young poet, are marked out in that celebrated saying of Charles the ninth of France; "*Equi et poetæ ALENDI sunt, non SAGINANDI.*"—Poets and horses are to be *fed* and not *fattened*.

THE ESSAY ON CRITICISM, which occasioned the introduction of these reflections, was first, I am well

* The Adventurer, No. 50.

well informed, written in prose, according to the precept of Vida, and the practice of Racine.

Quinetiam, prius effigiem formare, SOLUTIS,
Totiusque operis simulacrum fingere, verbis,
Proderit ; atque omnis ex ordinenectere partes,
Et seriem rerum, et certos sibi ponere fines,
Per quos tuta regens vestigia tendere pergās *.

When Racine had fixed on a subject for a play, he wrote down in plain prose, not only the subject of each of the five acts, but of every scene and every speech ; so that he could take a view of the whole at once, and see whether every part cohered, and co-operated to produce the intended event: when his matter was thus regularly disposed, he was used to say, “ My Tragedy is finished.”

I NOW propose to make some observations on, and illustrations of, such passages and precepts in this ESSAY, as, on account of their utility, novelty, or elegance, deserve particular attention ; and perhaps I may take the freedom to hint at a few imperfections, in this SENSIBLE performance. I shall cite the passages in the natural order, in which they successively occur.

1. In poets as true genius is but rare †.

It is indeed so extremely rare, that no country in
the

* Poetic. lib. i. ver. 75.

† Ver. 11.

the succession of many ages has produced above three or four persons that deserve the title. The "man of rhymes" may be easily found; but the genuine poet, of a lively plastic imagination, the true MAKER OR CREATOR, is so uncommon a prodigy, that one is almost tempted to subscribe to the opinion of Sir William Temple, where he says, "That of all the numbers of mankind, that live within the compass of a thousand years, for one man that is born capable of making a great poet, there may be a thousand born capable of making as great generals, or ministers of state, as the most renowned in story *." There are indeed more causes required to concur to the formation of the former, than of the latter; which necessarily render its production more difficult.

2. True taste as seldom is the critic's share †,

LA BRUYERE says very sensibly, I will allow the good writers are scarce enough; but then, I ask, where are the people that know how to read?

3. Let such teach others who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well ‡.

It is somewhere remarked by Dryden, I think, that none but a poet is qualified to judge of a poet.

The

* Miscell. Essay iv. part 2. † Ver. 12. ‡ Ver. 15.

The maxim is however contradicted by experience. Aristotle is said indeed to have written one ode; but neither Bossu nor Hurd, are poets. The penetrating author of the Reflexions on Poetry, Painting, and Music, will for ever be read with delight, and with profit, by all ingenious artists; nevertheless, says Voltaire, he did not understand music, could never make verses, and was not possessed of a single picture; but he had read, seen, heard, and reflected a great deal *. And Lord Shaftesbury speaks with some indignation on this subject; "If a musician performs his part well in the hardest symphonies, he must necessarily know the notes, and understand the rules of harmony and music. But must a man, therefore, who has an ear, and has studied the rules of music, of necessity, have a voice or hand? Can no one possibly judge a *fiddle*, but who is himself a fiddler? Can no one judge a picture, but who is himself a layer of colours †?" Quintilian and Pliny, who speak of the works of the ancient painters and statuaries, with so much taste and sentiment, handled not themselves either the pencil or the chissel, nor Longinus and Dionysius the harp. But altho' such as have actually performed nothing in the art itself, may not on that account, be totally disqualified to judge with accuracy of any piece of workmanship, yet perhaps a judgment will come with more authority and force from
an

* Louis 14. p. 354.

† Characteristics, V. 3. p. 190. Edit. 12mo.

an artist himself. Hence the connoisseurs highly prize the treatise of Rubens, concerning the imitation of antique statues, the Art of painting by Leonardo da Vinci, and the Lives of the painters by Vasari. As for the same reasons, Rameau's dissertation on the thorough bass, and the introduction to a good taste in music by the excellent, but neglected Gemini-ani, demand a particular regard. The prefaces of Dryden would be equally valuable, if he did not so frequently contradict himself, and advance opinions diametrically opposite to each other. Some of Corneille's discourses on his own tragedy's are admirably just. And one of the best pieces of modern criticism, the academy's observations on the Cid, was, we know, the work of persons who had themselves written well. And our author's own excellent preface to his translation of the Iliad, one of the best pieces of prose in the English language, is an example how well poets are qualified to be critics.

4. Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,
As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass;
Those half-learn'd wittlings, numerous in our isle,
As half-form'd insects on the banks of Nile;
Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,
Their generation's so equivocal *.

THESE lines and those preceding and following them are excellently satirical; and were, I think, the first

* Ver. 38.

first we find in his works, that give an indication of that species of poetry to which his talent was most powerfully bent, and in which, tho' not, as we shall see, in others, he excelled all mankind. The simile of the mule heightens the satire, and is new; as is the application of the insects of the Nile. POPE never shines so brightly as when he is proscribing bad authors.

5. — In the soul while MEMORY prevails,
The solid pow'r of UNDERSTANDING fails;
Where beams of bright IMAGINATION play,
The MEMORY's soft figures melt away *.

I HARDLY believe there is in any language a metaphor more appositely applied, or more elegantly expressed, than this of the effects of the warmth of fancy. Locke who has embellished his dry subject with a vast variety of pleasing similitudes and allusions, has a passage, relating to the retentiveness of the memory, so very like this before us, and so happily worded, that I cannot forbear giving the reader the pleasure of comparing them together; only premising, that these two passages are patterns of the manner in which the metaphor should be used, and of the method of preserving it unmixed with any other idea, and not continuing it too far. "Our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching; where though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions

inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away. How much the constitution of our bodies are concerned in this, and whether the temper of the brain makes this difference, that in some, it retains the characters drawn on it like marble, in others like freestone, and in others little better than sand, I shall not here enquire; though it may seem probable that the constitution of the body does sometimes influence the memory; since we sometimes find a disease quite strip the mind of all its ideas; and the flames of a fever, in a few days, CALCINE all those images to dust and confusion, which seemed to be as lasting as if graved in marble *.

WITH respect to the truth of this observation of POPE, experience abundantly evinceth, that the three great faculties of the soul here spoken of are seldom found united in the same person. There have yet existed but a few transcendent geniuses, who have been singularly blest with this rare assemblage of different talents. All that I can at present recollect, who have at once enjoyed in full vigour, a sublime and splendid imagination, a solid and profound understanding, an exact and tenacious memory, are Herodotus, Plato, Tully, Livy, Tacitus, Galilæo, Bacon, Des Cartes, Locke, Malebranche, Milton, Burnet of the Charterhouse, Berkeley and Montequieu. Bacon, in his *Novum Organum*, divides the
human

* Essay concerning Human Understanding, ch. x. sect. 5.

human genius into two sorts ; “ Men of dry distinct heads, cool imaginations, and keen application ; they easily apprehend the differences of things ; are masters in controversy, and excel in confutation ; and these are the most common. The second sort are men of warm fancies, elevated thought, and wide knowledge : they instantly perceive the resemblances of things, and are poets or makers in science, invent arts, and strike out new light wherever they carry their views *.” This general observation has in it all that acuteness, comprehension, and knowledge of man, which so eminently distinguished this philosopher.

6. One science only will one genius fit ;
 So vast is art, so narrow human wit.—
 Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
 But oft in those confin'd to single parts †.

WHEN Tully attempted poetry, he became as ridiculous as Bolingbroke when he attempted philosophy and divinity. We look in vain for that genius which produced the dissertation on parties, in the tedious philosophical works ; of which it is no exaggerated satire to say, that the reasoning of them is sophistical and inconclusive, the style diffuse and verbose, and the learning seemingly contained in them not drawn from the originals, but picked up and purloined from French critics and translations ; and particularly

* Pag. 40.

† Ver. 60.

larly from Bayle, from Rapin, and Thomassin, (as perhaps may be one day minutely shewn) together with the assistances which our Cudworth and Stanley, happily afforded a writer confessedly ignorant of the Greek tongue, who has yet the insufferable * arrogance

* I cannot forbear subjoining a passage of an excellent writer and accomplished scholar, which is so very apposite to the present purpose, that one would think the author had Bolingbroke in his eye, if his valuable work had not been published before the world was blessed with the First Philosophy. "He who pretends to discuss the Sentiments of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, or any one of the ancient philosophers, or even to cite and translate him, (except in trite and obvious sentiments) without accurately knowing the Greek tongue in general; the nice difference of many words apparently synonymous; the peculiar style of the author whom he presumes to handle; the new-coined words, and new significations given to old words, used by such author and his sect; the whole philosophy of such sect; together with the connections and dependencies of its several parts, whether Logical, Ethical, or Physical; he, I say, that without this previous preparation, attempts what I have said, will shoot in the dark; will be liable to perpetual *blunders*: will *explain*, and *praise*, and *censure*, merely by *chance*; and though HE MAY POSSIBLY TO FOOLS APPEAR AS A WISE MAN, WILL CERTAINLY AMONG THE WISE EVER PASS FOR A FOOL. Such a man's intellect comprehends antient philosophy, as his eye comprehends a distant prospect. He may see perhaps enough to know mountains from plains, and seas from woods; but for an accurate discernment of particulars and their character, this, without farther helps, 'tis impossible he should attain." HERMES, by HARRIS: book 2. chap. 3. pag. 270.

gance to vilify and censure, and to think he can confute, the best writers in that best language.

WHEN Fontaine, whose tales indicated a truly comic genius, brought a comedy on the stage, it was received with a contempt equally unexpected and deserved. Terence has left us no tragedy; and the Mourning Bride of Congreve, notwithstanding the praises bestowed on it by POPE, in the Dunciad *, is certainly a despicable performance; the plot is unnaturally intricate, and overcharged with incidents, the sentiments trite, and the language turgid and bombast. Heemskirk and Teniers could not succeed in a serious and sublime subject of history painting. The latter, it is well known, designed cartoons for tapestry, representing the history of the Turriani of Lombardy. Both the composition and the expression are extremely indifferent: and certain nicer virtuosi have remarked, that in the serious pieces of Titian himself, even in one of his Last Suppers, a circumstance of the Ridiculous and the Familiar is introduced, which suits not with the dignity of his subject. † Hogarth's picture of Richard III. is pure
and

* B. iii. v. 310. In the notes.

† The author gladly lays hold of the opportunity of this SECOND EDITION of his work, to confess a mistake he had committed with respect to two admirable paintings of Mr. Hogarth, his PAUL PREACHING, and his INFANT MOSES; which, on a closer examination, are not chargeable with the
Blemishes

and unmixed with any dissimilar and degrading circumstances, and strongly impresses terror and amazement. The modesty and good sense of the ancients is, in this particular, as in others, remarkable. The same writer never presumed to undertake more than one kind of dramatic poetry, if we except the *CYCLOPS* of Euripides. A poet never presumed to plead in public, or to write history, or indeed any considerable work in prose. The same actors never recited tragedy and comedy: this was observed long ago, by Plato, in the third book of his *REPUBLIC*. They seem to have held that diversity, nay universality, of excellence, at which the moderns frequently aim, to be a gift unattainable by man. We therefore of Great-Britain have perhaps more reason to congratulate ourselves, on two very singular phenomena; I mean, Shakespear's being able to pourtray characters so very different as *FALSTAFF*, and *MACKBETH*; and Garrick's being able to personate so inimitably a *LEAR*, or an *ABEL DRUGGER*. Nothing

blemishes imputed to them. Justice obliges him to declare the high opinion he entertains of the abilities of this inimitable artist, who shines in so many different lights, and on such very dissimilar subjects; and whose works have more of what the ancients called the *ΗΘΟΣ* in them, than the compositions of any other Modern. For the rest, the author begs leave to add, that he is so far from being ashamed of retracting his error, that he had rather appear a *MAN OF CANDOR*, than the best *CRITIC* that ever lived.

thing can more fully demonstrate the extent and verifiability of these two original geniuses. Corneille, whom the French are so fond of opposing to Shakespear, produced very contemptible comedies; and the PLAIDEURS of Racine is so close a resemblance of Aristophanes, that it ought not to be here urged. The most universal of authors seems to be Voltaire; who has written almost equally well, both in prose and verse; and whom either the tragedy of *MEROPE*, or the history of *LOUIS XIV*, would, alone, have immortalized.

7. Those rules of old, discover'd not devis'd,
Are nature still, but nature methodiz'd;
Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
By the same laws which first herself ordain'd *.

THE precepts of the art of poesy, were posterior to practice; the rules of the Epopea were all drawn from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; and of Tragedy, from the *OEDIPUS* of Sophocles. A petulant rejection, and an implicit veneration, of the rules of the ancient critics, are equally destructive of true taste. "It ought to be the first endeavour of a writer, says the excellent RAMBLER †, to distinguish nature from custom, or that which is established because it is right, from that which is right only because it is established; that he may neither violate essential principles by a desire of novelty, nor debar

F

himself

* Ver. 88.

† No. 156.

himself from the attainment of any beauties within his view, by a needless fear of breaking rules, where no literary dictator had authority to prescribe." The same penetrating and judicious author, who always thinks for himself, has also another passage too full of strong sense, and too apposite to the subject before us, to be here omitted.

"CRITICISM, though dignified, from the earliest ages, by the labours of men eminent for knowledge and sagacity, and, since the revival of polite literature, the favourite study of European scholars, has not yet attained the certainty and stability of science. The rules that have been hitherto received, are seldom drawn from any settled principle, or self-evident postulate; nor are adapted to the natural and invariable constitution of things: but will be found upon examination, to be the arbitrary edicts of dictators exalted by their own authority, who out of many means by which the same end may be attained, selected those which happened to occur to their own reflection; and then by an edict, which idleness and timidity were willing to obey, prohibited any new experiments of wit, restrained fancy from the indulgence of her innate inclination to hazard and adventure, and condemned all the future flights of genius, to pursue the path of the Mæonian eagle.

THE authority claimed by critics may be more justly opposed, as it is apparently derived from them whom they endeavour to controul; for we are indebted for a very small part of the rules of writing to the acuteness of those by whom they are delivered. The critics have generally no other merit, than that of having read the works of great authors with attention; they have observed the arrangement of their matter, and the graces of their expression; and then expect honour and reverence for precepts, which they never could have invented: so that practice has introduced rules, rather than rules have directed practice.

FOR this reason, the laws of every species of writing have been settled by the ideas of him by whom it was first raised to reputation; without much enquiry, whether his performances were not yet susceptible of improvement. The excellencies and the faults of celebrated writers have been equally recommended to posterity; and so far has blind reverence prevailed, that the NUMBER of their BOOKS has been thought worthy of imitation *."

THIS liberal and manly censure of critical bigotry, extends not to those fundamental and indispensable rules, which nature and necessity dictate, and demand to be

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observed;

observed ; such, for instance, as in the higher kinds of poetry, that the action of the epopea be one, great, and entire ; that the hero be eminently distinguished, move our concern, and deeply interest us ; that the episodes arise easily out of the main fable ; that the action commence as near the catastrophe as possible : and, in the drama, that no more events be crowded together, than can be justly supposed to happen during the time of representation, or to be transacted on one individual spot, and the like. But the absurdity here animadverted on, is the scrupulous nicety of those, who bind themselves to obey frivolous and unimportant laws ; such as, that an epic poem should consist not of less than twelve books ; that it should end fortunately ; that in the first book there should be no simile ; that the exordium should be very simple and unadorned : that in a tragedy, only three personages should appear at once upon the stage ; and that every tragedy should consist of five acts ; by the rigid observation of which last unnecessary precept, the poet is deprived of using many a moving story, that would furnish matter enough for three perhaps, but not for five acts ; with other rules, of the like indifferent nature. For the rest, as Voltaire observes, * whether the action of an epopea be simple or complex, completed in a month or in a year, or a longer time, whether the scene be fixed on one spot, as in the Iliad ;

* *Essay sur la poesie Epique*, pag. 339. tom. 1.

Iliad ; or that the hero voyages from sea to sea, as in the Odyssey ; whether he be furious like Achilles, or pious like Æneas ; whether the action pass on land or sea ; on the coast of Africa, as in the *Luziada* of Camoens ; in America, as in the *Araucana* of Alonzo D'Ercilla ; in heaven, in hell, beyond the limits of our world, as in the *Paradise Lost* ; all these circumstances are of no consequence : the poem will be for ever an Epic poem, an Heroice poem ; at least, till another new title be found proportioned to its merit. If you scruple, says Addison, to give the title of an Epic poem to the *Paradise Lost* of Milton, call it, if you choose, a *DIVINE* poem, give it whatever name you please ; provided you confess, that it is a work as admirable in its kind as the *Iliad*. “ To dispute about titles is an unpardonable puerility.”

8. Hear how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites,
When to repress, and when indulge our flights *.

IN the second part of Shaftesbury's *ADVICE* to an Author, is a judicious and elegant account of the rise and progress of arts and sciences, in ancient Greece ; to subjects of which sort, it were to be wished this author had always confined himself, as he indisputably understood them well, rather than have blemished and belied his patriotism, by writing against the religion of his country. I shall give the

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reader

* Ver. 92.

reader a passage that relates to the origin of criticism, which is curious and just. " When the persuasive arts, which were necessary to be cultivated among a people that were to be convinced before they acted, were grown thus in repute ; and the power of moving the affections become the study and emulation of the forward wits and aspiring geniuses of the times ; it would necessarily happen, that many geniuses of equal size and strength, though less covetous of public applause, of power, or of influence over mankind, would content themselves with the contemplation, merely, of these enchanting arts. These they would the better enjoy, the more they refined their taste, and cultivated their ear.——Hence was the origin of CRITICS ; who, as arts and sciences advanced, would necessarily come withal into repute ; and being heard with satisfaction in their turn, were at length tempted to become authors, and appear in public. These were honoured with the name of Sophists ; a character which in early times was highly respected. Nor did the gravest philosophers, who were censors of manners, and critics of a higher degree, disdain to exert their criticism on the inferior arts ; especially in those relating to speech, and the power of argument and persuasion. When such a race as this was once risen, 'twas no longer possible to impose on mankind, by what was specious and pretending. The public would be paid in no false wit, or jingling eloquence. Where the learned critics were so well received,

received, and philosophers themselves disdained not to be of the number; there could not fail to arise critics of an inferior order, who would subdivide the several provinces of this empire *

9. Know well each Ancient's proper character;
His fable, subject, scope, in every page;
Religion, country, genius of his age †.

FROM their inattention to these particulars, many critics, and particularly the French, have been guilty of great absurdities. When Perrault impotently attempted to ridicule the first Stanza of the first Olympic of Pindar, he was ignorant that the poet, in beginning with the praises of WATER †, alluded to the philosophy of Thales, who taught that water was the principle of all things; and which philosophy, Empedocles the Sicilian, a cotemporary of Pindar, and a subject of Hiero to whom Pindar wrote, had adopted in his beautiful poem. Homer and the Greek tragedians have been likewise censured, the former for protracting the Iliad after the death of Hector; and the latter, for continuing the AJAX and PHOENISSÆ, after the deaths of their respective heroes. But the censurers did not consider the importance of burial among the ancients; and that the action of the Iliad would have been imperfect without a description of

F 4

the

* Characteristics, vol. I. 12mo. pag. 163. † Ver. 119.

† Ἀγιστον μιν ὕδατος.

the funeral rites of Hector and Patroclus: as the two tragedies, without those of Polynices and Eteocles: for the ancients esteemed a deprivation of sepulture to be a more severe calamity than death itself. It is observable that this circumstance did not occur to POPE *, when he endeavoured to justify this conduct of Homer, by only saying, that as the anger of Achilles does not die with Hector, but persecutes his very remains, the poet still keeps up to his subject by describing the many effects of his anger, 'till it is fully satisfied: and that for this reason, the two last books of the Iliad may be thought not to be excrescences, but essential to the poem. I will only add, that I do not know an author whose capital excellence suffers more from the reader's not regarding his climate and country, than the incomparable Cervantes. There is a striking propriety in the madness of Don Quixote, not frequently taken notice of; for Thuanus informs us, that MADNESS is a common disorder among the Spaniards at the latter part of life, about the age of which the knight is represented. “ Sur la fin de ses jours Mendoza devint furieux, comme font d'ordinaire les Espagnols †.”

10. Still with itself compar'd, his text peruse,
And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse †.

ALTHOUGH

* Iliad xxiii. Note 1.

† Perroniana et Thuana, a Cologne, 1695, pag. 431.

‡ Ver. 128.

ALTHOUGH perhaps it may seem impossible to produce any new observations on Homer and Virgil, after so many volumes of criticism as have been spent upon them, yet the following remarks have a novelty and penetration in them that may entertain; especially, as the treatise from which they are taken is extremely scarce. “ *Quæ variæ inter se notæ atque imagines animorum, a principibus utriusque populi poetis, Homero et Virgilio, mirificè exprimiuntur. Siquidem Homeri duces et reges rapacitate, libidine, atque anilibus questibus, lacrymisque puerilibus. Græcam levitatem et inconstantiam referunt. Virgiliani vero principes, ab eximio poeta, qui Romanæ severitatis fastidium, et Latinum supercilium verebatur, et ad heroum populum loquebatur, ita componuntur ad majestatem consularem, ut quamvis ab Asiatica mollitie luxuque venerint, inter Furios atque Claudios nati educatique videantur. Neque suam, ullo actu, Æneas originem prodidisset, nisi, a præfractiore aliquanto pietate, fudisset crebro copiam lacrymarum.—Qua meliorum expressione morum hac ætate, non modo Virgilius Latinorum poetarum princeps, sed quivis inflatissimus vernaculorum, Homero præfertur: cum hic animos proceribus induerit suos, ille vero alienos.—Quamobrem varietas morum, qui carmine reddebantur, et hominum ad quos ea dirigebantur, inter Latinam Græcamque poesin, non inventionis tantum attulit, sed et elocutionis discrimen illud, quod præcipue inter Homerum et Virgili-*

um deprehenditur ; cum sententias et ornamenta quæ Homerus sparserat, Virgilius, Romanorum aurium causa, contraxerit ; atque ad mores et ingenia retulerit eorum, qui a pœsi non petebant publicam aut privatam institutionem, quam ipsi Marte suo invenerant ; sed tantum delectationem. *” Blackwell, in his inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer, has taken many observations from this valuable book, particularly in his twelfth Section.

11. Some beauties yet no precepts can declare,
 For there's a happiness, as well as care.
 Music resembles poetry ; in each
 Are nameless graces, which no methods teach,
 And which a master-hand alone can reach †.

POPE in this passage seems to have remembered one of the Essays of Bacon, of which he is known to have been remarkably fond. “ There is no excellent beauty, that hath not some strangeness in the proportion. A man cannot tell whether Apelles or Albert Durer, were the more trifler : whereof the one would make a personage by geometrical proportions ; the other by taking the best parts out of divers faces, to make one excellent. Such personages, I think, would please nobody,

* J. Vincentii Gravinae de Pœsi, ad S. Maffeiū EPIST. Added to his treatise entitled, Della Ragion Poetica. In Napoli. 1716, pag. 239, 250.

† Ver. 141.

nobody, but the painter that made them. Not but I think, a painter may make a better face than ever was; but he must do it by a kind of felicity, as a musician that maketh an excellent ayre in music, and not by rule. A man shall see faces, that if you examine them, part by part, you shall find never a good one; and yet altogether do well *.

12. Thus Pegafus, a nearer way to take,
 May boldly deviate from the common track;
 From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
 And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
 Which, without passing thro' the judgment, gains
 The heart and all its ends at once obtains †.

HERE is evidently a blameable mixture of metaphors; where the attributes of the horse and the writer are confounded. The former may justly be said to "take a nearer way, and, to deviate from a track;" but how can a *horse* "snatch a grace," or "gain the heart?"

13. Some figures monstrous and mishap'd appear,
 Consider'd singly, or beheld too near,
 Which, but proportion'd to their light, or place,
 Due distance reconciles to time and place †.

By this excellent observation, delivered in a beautiful

* Essay xliii. ON BEAUTY.

† Ver. 130.

† Ver. 171.

tiful metaphor, all the faults imputed to Homer may be justified. Those who censure what is called the **GROSSNESS** of some of his images, may please to attend to the following remark of a writer, by no means prejudiced in favor of the ancients. “Quant a ce qu’ on appelle **GROSSIERETE** dans les héros d’ Homere, on peut rire tant qu’ on voudra de voir Patrocle, au neuvième livre de l’ Iliade, mettre trois gigots de mouton dans une marmite, allumer et souffler le feu, et préparer le diner avec Achille : Achille et Patrocle n’en sont pas moins éclatans. Charles XII. Roi de Suède, a fait six mois sa cuisine a Demir-Tocca, sans perdre rien de son heroïsme ; et la plupart de nos generaux qui portent dans une campe tout le luxe d’ une cour effeminée, auront bien de la peine a egaler ces heros, qui faisoient leur cuisine eux-mêmes.—En un mot, Homere avoit a représenter un Ajax et un Hector ; non un courtisan de Versailles, ou de Saint James *.”

13. A prudent chief not always must display
His pow’rs in equal rank, and fair array †.

THE same may be said of music : concerning which, a discerning judge has lately made the following

* Voltaire, *Essay sur la Poésie Epique*. Les Œuvres. Tom. ii. pag. 354, 355. This Essay is very different from what formerly appeared in England.

† Ver. 175.

ing observation. "I do not mean to affirm, that in this extensive work [of Marcello] every recitative, air, or chorus, is of equal excellence. A continued elevation of this kind no author ever came up to. Nay, if we consider that variety, which in all arts is necessary to keep up attention, we may perhaps affirm with truth, that *INEQUALITY* makes a part of the character of excellence: that something ought to be thrown into shades, in order to make the lights more striking. And, in this respect, Marcello is truly excellent: if ever he seems to *FALL*, it is only to rise with more astonishing majesty and greatness*." It may be pertinent to subjoin Roscommon's remark on the same subject.

— — — — — Far the greatest part
Of what some call neglect, is study'd art.
When Virgil seems to trifle in a line,
'Tis but a warning piece, which gives the sign
To wake your fancy, and prepare your sight
To reach the noble height of some unusual flight †.

14. Hail bards-triumphant born in happier days ‡.

DOCTOR Warburton is of opinion, that "there is a *pleasantry* in this title, which alludes to the state of *WARFARE*, that all true genius must undergo

* Avison's Essay on Musical Expression, edit. ii. pag. 103.

† Essay on Tragic Verse.

‡ Ver. 189.

dergo while here on earth." Is not this interpretation of the word *triumphant* very far-fetched, and foreign to the author's meaning? Who, I conceive, used the word, to denote merely the TRIUMPH, which arose from *superiority*.

16. The last, the meanest of your sons inspire *.

"THIS word *last*, says the same commentator, spoken in his early youth, as it were by chance, seems to have been OMINOUS." I am not persuaded that all true genius died with POPE: for one would be tempted to think, that the seasons of Thomson, and Pleasures of Imagination, and the Odes of Akenfide, the Night-thoughts of Young, the Leonidas of Glover, the Elegy of Gray, and Ode on Eton College, the truly pathetic Monody on lady Lyttleton, together with many Pieces in Doddsley's Miscellanies, were not published when Dr. Warburton delivered this insinuation of a failure of poetical abilities.

16. So pleas'd at first the tow'ring Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
Th' eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:
But, those attain'd we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthen'd way;
Th' increasing prospect tires our wand'ring eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise †.

THIS

* Ver. 196.

† Ver. 225.

THIS comparison is frequently mentioned, as an instance of the strength of fancy. The images however appear too general and indistinct, and the last line conveys no new idea to the mind. The following picture in Shaftesbury, on the same sort of subject, appears to be more full and striking. "Beneath the mountain's foot, the rocky country rises into hills, a proper basis of the pondrous mass above: where huge embodied rocks lie piled on one another, and seem to prop the high arch of heaven. See! with what trembling steps poor mankind tread the narrow brink of the deep precipices! From whence with giddy horror they look down, mistrusting even the ground that bears them; whilst they hear the hollow sound of torrents underneath, and see the ruin of the impending rock; with falling trees, which hang with their roots upwards, and seem to draw more ruin after them *". See Livy's picturesque description of Annibal passing the Alps.

17. A perfect judge will read each word of wit,
With the same spirit, that its author writ †.

To be able to judge of poetry, says Voltaire, a man must feel strongly, must be born with some sparks of that fire, which animates the poet whom he criticises. As in deciding upon the merit of a piece
of

* The MORALISTS. Characteristics, vol. ii. pag. 253.

† Ver. 233.

of music, it is not enough, it is indeed nothing, to calculate the proportion of sounds as a mathematician, but we must have an ear and a soul for music *.

18. Thus when we view some well proportion'd dome,
 (The world's just wonder, and ev'n thine, O Rome !)
 No single parts unequally surprize,
 All comes united to th' admiring eyes;
 No monstrous height, or breadth, or length appear,
 ' The Whole at once is bold, and regular †.

THIS is justly and elegantly expressed; and though it may seem difficult to speak of the same subject after such a description, yet, Akenfide has ventured, and nobly succeeded.

Mark, how the dread PANTHEON stands,
 Amid the domes of modern hands!
 Amid the toys of idle state,
 How simply, how severely great!
 Then pause! † — — —

19. Once on a time, La Mancha's knight, they say,
 A certain bard encountring on the way §. —

By this short tale POPE has shewed us, how much he could have excelled in telling a story of humour. The incident is taken from the second part of Don Quixote,

* Ubi supra, pag. 361.

† Ver. 247.

‡ Ode to L. Huntington.

§ Ver. 267.

Quixote, first written by Don Alonzo Fernandez de Avellanada, and afterwards translated, or rather imitated and new-modelled, by no less an author than the celebrated Le Sage *. The book is not so contemptible as some authors insinuate; it was well received in France, and abounds in many strokes of humour and character worthy Cervantes himself. The brevity to which POPE's narration was confined, would not permit him to insert the following humorous dialogue at length. "I am satisfied you'll compass your design, said the scholar, provided you omit the combat in the lists. Let him have a care of that, said Don Quixote interrupting him, that is the best part of the plot. But Sir, quoth the Bachelor, if you would have me adhere to Aristotle's rules, I must omit the combat. Aristotle, replied the Knight, I grant was a man of some parts; but his capacity was not unbounded: and give me leave to tell you, his authority does not extend over combats in the list, which are far above his narrow rules. Would you suffer the chaste Queen of Bohemia to perish? For how can you clear her innocence? Believe me, COM-

B A T

* Le Sage generally took his plans from the Spanish writers, the manners of which nation he has well imitated. *Le Diable Boiteux* was drawn from the *Diabolo Cojuelo* of Guevara; his *Gil Blas* from *Don Gusman D'Alfarache*. Le Sage made a journey into Spain to acquaint himself with the Spanish customs. He is a natural writer, of true humour. He died in a little house near Paris, where he supported himself by writing, 1747. He had been deaf ten years.

BAT is the most honourable method you can pursue; and, besides, it will add such grace to your play, that all the rules in the universe must not stand in competition with it. Well, Sir Knight, replied the Bachelor, for your sake, and for the honour of chivalry, I will not leave out the combat: and that it may appear the more glorious, all the court of Bohemia shall be present at it, from the princes of the blood, to the very footmen. But still one difficulty remains, which is, that our common theatres are not large enough for it. There must be one erected on purpose, answered the Knight; and in a word, rather than leave out the combat, the play had better be acted in a field or plain *."

20. Some to *conceit* alone their taste confine †,
And glitt'ring thoughts struck out at every line.

SIMPLICITY, with elegance and propriety, is the perfection of style in every composition. Let us, on this occasion, compare two passages from Theocritus and Ovid upon the same subject. The Cyclops, in the former, addresses Galatea with comparisons, natural, obvious, and drawn from his situation.

Ω λευκα Γαλατεια, τι τον φιλονι' ἀποβάλλη;
Λευκότερα παντας ποιδειν, απαλώτερα δ' ἀρνυ,
Μοσχῶ γαυρότερα, φιαρότερα ομφανῶ ὤμας †.

These

* Continuation of Hist. of Don Quixote, b. iii. ch. 10.

† Ver. 289.

† Idyll. Κυκλ.

These simple and pastoral images were the most proper that could occur to a Cyclops, and to an inhabitant of Sicily. Ovid could not restrain the luxuriancy of his genius, on the same occasion, from wandering into an endless variety of flowry and unappropriated similitudes, and equally applicable to any other person or place.

Candidior nivei folio, Galatea, ligustri;
 Floridior pratis; longâ procerior alno;
 Splendidior vitro; tenero lascivior hædo;
 Lævior assiduo detritis æquore conchis;
 Solibus hybernis, æstivâ gratior umbrâ;
 Nobilior pomis; platano conspectior altâ;
 Lucidior glacie; maturâ dulcior uvâ;
 Mollior et cygni plumis, et lacte coactô;
 Et, si non fugias, riguo formosior horto *.

There are seven more lines of comparison.

12. False eloquence, like the prismatic glass,
 Its gaudy colours spreads on every place:
 The face of nature we no more survey,
 All glares alike without distinction gay †.

THE nauseous affectation of expressing every thing pompously and poetically, is no where more visible, than in a poem lately published, entitled AMYNTOR and THEODORA. The following instance may be alledged

* Metam. 13. 789.

† Ver. 311.

alleged among many others. Amyntor having a pathetic tale to discover, being choaked with sorrow and at a loss for utterance, uses these ornamental and unnatural images.

————— ———— ———— O could I steal
From harmony her softest warbled strain
Of melting air! or Zephyre's vernal voice!
Or Philomela's song, when love dissolves
To liquid blandishment his evening lay,
All nature smiling round *

Voltaire has given a comprehensive rule with respect to every species of composition, " Il ne faut rechercher, ni les pensées, ni les tours, ni les expressions, et que l'art, dans tous les grands ouvrages, est de bien raisonner, sans trop faire d'argument; de bien peindre, sans vouloir tout peindre; d'émouvoir, sans vouloir toujours exciter les passions †."

22. Some by old words to fame have made pretence ‡.

QUINTILIAN'S advice on this subject is as follows. " Cum sint autem verba propria, ficta, translata; propriis dignitatem dat antiquitas. Namque et sanctiorem, et magis admirabilem reddunt orationem, quibus non quilibet fuit usus: eoque ornamento acerrimi iudicii Virgilius unice est usus. *Olli* enim, et *quianam*, et *mis*, et *pone*, pellucunt, et aspergunt

* Cant. iii. ver. 92.

† Oeuvres, torn. iii. pag. 332.

‡ Ver. 324.

pergunt illam, quæ etiam in picturis est gratissima, vetustatis inimitabilem arti auctoritatem. Sed utendum modo, nec ex ultimis tenebris repetenda *."

23. Where'er you find the cooling western breeze,
In the next line it whispers through the trees †.

TRITE and unvaried rhymes offend us, not only as they are destitute of the grace of novelty, but as they imply carelessness in the poet, who adopts what he finds ready made to his hands. We have not many compositions where NEW and uncommon rhymes are introduced. One or two writers however I cannot forbear mentioning, who have been studious of this beauty. They are Parnelle, Pitt in his Translations from Vida, West in his Pindar, Thomson in the Castle of Indolence, and the author of an elegant Ode TO SUMMER, published in a Miscellany entitled the UNION ‡.

24. A needless Alexandrine ends the song §.

DRYDEN was the first who introduced this measure into our English heroic, for we do not ever find it in Sandys or Waller. The French heroic consists exactly of the same number of feet, with a pause at the third foot, if it be a truly harmonious verse;

The

* Inst. Orat. lib. vii. c. 3. † Ver. 350.

‡ Edinburgh, 1753, pag. 81. § Ver. 356.

The long majestic march || and energy divine. POPE.

Un auteur a genoux || dans une humble preface. BOILEAU.

25. And praise the easy vigour of a line,
Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness join *.

FENTON, in his entertaining observations on Waller, has given us a curious anecdote concerning the great industry and exactness with which Waller polished even his smallest compositions. "When the court was at Windsor, these verses † were writ in the Tasso of her Royal Highness, at Mr. Waller's request, by the late Duke of Buckinghamshire; and I very well remember to have heard his Grace say, that the author employed the GREATEST PART OF A SUMMER, in composing, and correcting them. So that however he is generally reputed the parent of those swarms of insect wits, who affect to be thought easy writers, it is evident that he bestowed much time and care on his poems, before he ventured them out of his hands ‡."

26. True ease in writing comes from art not chance,
As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance §.

It is well known that the writings of Voiture, of Sarasin,

* Ver. 360. † Only ten in number.

‡ Fenton's Waller, edit. 12mo. OBSERVATIONS, pag. 148.

§ Ver. 362.

Sarassin, and Fontaine, cost them much pains, and were laboured into that facility for which they are so famous, with repeated alterations, and many rasures. Moliere is reported to have past whole days in fixing upon a proper epithet or rhyme, altho' his verses have all the flow and freedom of conversation. This happy facility, said a man of wit; may be compared to garden-terraces; the expence of which does not appear: and which, after the cost of several millions, yet seem to be a mere work of chance and nature. I have been informed, that Addison was so extremely nice in polishing his prose compositions, that, when almost a whole impression of a Spectator was worked off, he would stop the press, to insert a new preposition or conjunction.

27. Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
 And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;
 But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
 The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent roar;
 When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,
 The line too labours, and the words move slow;
 Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,
 Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and skims along the main*.

THESE lines are usually cited as fine examples of adapting the sound to the sense. But that POPE has failed in this endeavour, has been lately demonstrated by the RAMBLER. "The verse intended to represent

* Ver. 367.

sent the *whisper* of the *vernal breeze* must surely be confessed not much to excel in softness or volubility; and the *smooth stream* runs with a perpetual clasp of jarring consonants. The noise and turbulence of the *torrent*, is, indeed, distinctly imaged; for it requires very little skill to make our language rough. But in the lines which mention the *effort of Ajax*, there is no particular heaviness or delay. The *swiftness of Camilla* is rather contrasted than exemplified. Why the verse should be lengthened to express speed, will not easily be discovered. In the dactyls, used for that purpose by the ancients, two short syllables were pronounced with such rapidity, as to be equal only to one long; they therefore naturally exhibit the act of passing through a long space in a short time. But the *Alexandrine*, by its pause in the midst, is a tardy and stately measure, and the word *unbending*, one of the most sluggish and slow which our language affords, cannot much accelerate its motion *."

28. Be thou the first true merit to befriend,
His praise is lost, who stays till all commend †.

WHEN Thomson published his *WINTER*, it lay a long time neglected, 'till Mr. Spense made honourable mention of it in his *Essay on the Odyssey*; which becoming a popular book, made the poem universally known. Thomson always acknowledged the use of
this

* No. 92.

† Ver. 474.

this recommendation; and from this circumstance, an intimacy commenced between the critic and the poet, which lasted 'till the lamented death of the latter, who was of a most amiable and benevolent temper.

29. And such as Chaucer is shall Dryden be *.

WALLER has an elegant copy of verses on the mutability of the English tongue, which bears a strong resemblance to this passage of POPE.

Poets that lasting marble seek,
Must carve in Latin or in Greek;
We write in sand; our language grows,
And like the tide our work o'erflows.
Chaucer his SENSE can only boast,
The glory of his numbers lost!
Years have defac'd his matchless strain,
And yet HE DID NOT SING IN VAIN †.

To fix a language has been found, among the most able undertakers, to be a fruitless project. The style of the present French Novels and Memoirs, for the French at present produce but little besides, is visibly different from that of Boileau and Bossuet, notwithstanding the strict and seasonable injunctions of the Academy: and the diction, even of such a writer as

G

Maffei,

* Ver. 483.

† Of ENGLISH VERSE. Fenton's edit. pag. 147. 12mo.

Maffei, is corrupted with many words, not to be found in Machiavel or Ariosto.

30. So when the faithful pencil has design'd
Some bright idea of the master's mind,
When a new world leaps out at his command,
And ready nature waits upon his hand;
When the ripe colours soften and unite,
And sweetly melt into just shade and light;
When mellowing years their full perfection give,
And each bold figure just begins to live,
The treacherous colours the fair art betray,
And all the bright creation fades away *.

I HAVE quoted these beautiful lines at length, as I believe nothing was ever so happily expressed on the art of painting; a subject of which POPE always speaks *con amore*. Of all poets whatever, Milton has spoken most feelingly of music, and POPE of painting. The reader may however compare the following passage of Dryden on the same subject.

More cannot be by mortal art express'd,
But venerable age shall add the rest:
For Time shall with his ready pencil stand,
Retouch your figures with his ripening hand;
Mellow your colours, and imbrown the tint,
Add ev'ry grace, which Time alone can grant;
To future ages shall your fame convey,
And give more beauties than he takes away †.

IF

* Ver. 484.

† Dryden to Kneller.

IF POPE has so much excelled in speaking in the properest terms of this art, it may perhaps be ascribed to his having practised it; the same may be said of Milton, with respect to music. It may perhaps be wondered at, that a proficiency in these arts is not now frequently found in the same person. I cannot at present recollect any painters that were good poets; except Salvator Rosa, and Charles Vermader of Mulbrac in Flanders, whose comedies are much esteemed. But the satires of the former contain no strokes of that fervid and wild imagination, so visible in his landscapes.

31. If wit so much from ignorance undergo *.

THE inconveniences that attend wit are well enumerated in this excellent passage. Poets, who imagine they are known and admired, are frequently mortified and humbled. Boileau going one day to receive his pension, and the treasurer reading these words in his Order; "The pension we have granted to Boileau, on account of the satisfaction *his works* have given us," asked him of what kind were *his works*: "Of *Masonry*, replied the poet, I am a BUILDER." Racine always reckoned the praises of the ignorant among the chief sources of chagrin: and used to relate, that an old magistrate, who had never been at a play, was

G 2

carried,

* Ver. 508.

carried, one day, to his *Andromaque*. This magistrate was very attentive to the tragedy, to which was added the *Plaideurs*; and going out of the theatre, he said to the author, " I am extremely pleased, Sir, with your *Andromaque*, I am only amazed that it ends so *gaily*; J' avois d' abord eu quelque envie de pleurer, mais la vue des petits chiens m' a fait rire."

32. Now they who reach Parnassus' lofty crown,
Employ their pains to spurn some others down *.

IF we consider the arts used by Addison to suppress the rising merit of POPE, which are now fully laid open, it gives one pain to reflect, to what mean artifices, envy and malignity will compel a gentleman and a genius, to descend. It is certain, that Addison discouraged POPE from inserting the machinery in the *Rape of the Lock*: that he privately insinuated that POPE was a Tory and a Jacobite; and had a hand in writing the *Examiners*: that Addison himself translated the first book of Homer, published under Tickel's name: and that he secretly encouraged Gildon to abuse POPE in a virulent pamphlet, for which Addison paid Gildon ten guineas. This usage extorted from POPE the famous character of Atticus, which is perhaps the finest piece of satire extant. It is said, that

* Ver. 514.

that when Racine read his tragedy of Alexander to Corneille, the latter gave him many general commendations, but advised him to apply his genius, as not being adapted to the drama, to some other species of poetry. Corneille, one would hope, was incapable of a mean jealousy, and if he gave this advice, thought it really proper to be given.

33. When love was all an easy monarch's care
Seldom at council, never in a war *.

THE dissolute reign of Charles II. justly deserved the satirical proscription in this passage. Under the notion of laughing at the absurd austerities of the Puritans, it became the mode to run into the contrary extreme, and to ridicule real religion and unaffected virtue. The king, during his exile, had seen and admired the splendor of the court of Louis XIV. and endeavoured to introduce the same luxury into the English court. The common opinion, that this was the Augustan age in England, is excessively false. A just taste was by no means yet formed. What was called SHEER WIT, was alone studied and applauded. Rochester, it is said, had no idea that there could be a better poet than Cowley. The King was perpetually quoting HUDIBRAS. The neglect of such a poem as the Paradise Lost, will for ever remain a monument

G 3

of

of the bad taste that prevailed. It may be added, that the progress of philological learning, and of what is called the belles lettres, was perhaps obstructed by the institution of the Royal Society; which turned the thoughts of men of genius to physical enquiries. Our style in prose was but beginning to be polished: although the diction of Hobbes is sufficiently pure; which philosopher, and not the FLORID Spratt, was the classic of that age. If I was to name a time, when the arts and polite literature, were at their height in this nation, I should mention the latter end of King William, and the reign of Queen Anne.

34. With mean complacence ne'er betray your trust,
Nor be so civil as to prove unjust *.

OUR poet practised this excellent precept, in his conduct towards Wycherley; whose pieces he corrected, with equal freedom and judgment. But Wycherley, who had a bad heart, and an insufferable share of vanity, and who was one of the professed WITS of the last-mentioned age, was soon disgusted at this candour and ingenuity of POPE; insomuch, that he came to an open and ungenerous rupture with him.

35. Fear not the anger of the wise to raise;
Those best can bear reproof who merit praise. †

THE

* Ver. 581.

† Ver. 583.

THE freedom and unreservedness, with which Boileau and Racine communicated their works to each other, is hardly to be paralleled: of which many amiable instances appear in their letters, lately published by the son of the latter: particularly in the following. "J'ai trouvé que la TROMPETTE & LES SOURDS étoient trop joues, & qu' il ne falloit point trop appuyer sur votre incommodité, moins encore chercher de l' esprit sur ce sujet *." Boileau communicated to his friend the first sketch of his Ode on the Taking Namur. It is entertaining to contemplate a rude draught by such a master; and is no less pleasing to observe the temper, with which he receives the objections of Racine. "J'ai déjà retouché a tout cela; mais je ne veux point l' achever que je n' aie reçu vos remarques, qui sûrement m' éclaireront encore l' esprit." The same volume informs us of a curious anecdote, that Boileau generally made the second verse of a couplet before the first; that he declared it was one of the grand secrets of poetry to give, by this means, a greater energy and meaning to his verses; that he advised Racine to follow the same method, and said on this occasion, "I have taught him to rhyme *difficilement*."

36. No place so sacred from such fops is barr'd,
Nor is Paul's church more safe than Paul's church-yard;

G 4

Nay,

* Pag. 197. See also pag. 245. 191.

Nay, fly to altars; there they'll talk you dead:
For fools rush in where angels fear to tread. *

THIS stroke of satire is literally taken from Boileau.

Gardez-vous d'imiter ce rimeur furieux,
Qui de ses vains écrits lecteur harmonieux
Aborde en récitant quiconque le salue,
Et poursuit de ses vers les passans dans la rue,
Il n'est Temple si saint des Anges respecté,
Qui soit contre sa muse un lieu du sureté. †

Which lines allude to the impertinence of a French poet, called Du Perrier; who, finding Boileau one day at church, insisted upon repeating to him an ode during the elevation of the host; and desired his opinion, whether or no it was in the manner of Malherbe. Without this anecdote, the pleasantry of the satire would be overlooked. It may here be occasionally observed, how many beauties in this species of writing are lost, for want of knowing the facts to which they allude. The following passage may be produced as a proof. Boileau, in his excellent Epistle to his Gardener at Anteuil, says,

Mon maitre, dirois-tu, passe pour un Docteur,
Et parle quelquefois mieux qu'un Predicateur ‡.

IT

* Ver. 622.

† Art. Poet. Chant. iv.

‡ Epitre 11.

It seems our * author and Racine returned one day in high spirits from Versailles, with two honest citizens of Paris. As their conversation was full of gaiety and humour, the two citizens were vastly delighted: and one of them, at parting, stopt Boileau with this compliment, “ I have travelled with Doc-

G 5

tors

* The names of Racine, and Corneille, being often mentioned in this work, it will not be improper to add an ingenious Parallel of their respective merits, written by Fontenelle.

I. Corneille had no excellent author before his eyes, whom he could follow: Racine had Corneille.

II. Corneille found the French stage in a barbarous state, and advanced it to great Perfection: Racine has not supported it in the perfection in which he found it.

III. The characters of Corneille are true, though they are not common: The characters of Racine are not true, but only so far forth as they are common.

IV. Sometimes the characters of Corneille, are, in some respects, false and unnatural, in that they are noble and singular: Those of Racine are often, in some respects, low, on account of their being natural and ordinary.

V. He that has a noble heart would chuse to resemble the heroes of Corneille: He that has a little heart is pleased to find his own resemblance in the heroes of Racine.

VI. We

tors of the Sorbonne, and even with Religious; but I never heard so many fine things said before; *en verite vous parlez cent fois mieux qu' un PREDICATEUR.*"

It is but justice to add, that the fourteen succeeding verses in the poem before us, containing the character of a TRUE CRITIC, are superior to any thing

VI. We carry, from hearing the pieces of the One, a desire to be virtuous: And we carry the pleasure of finding men like ourselves in foibles and weaknesses, from the pieces of the Other.

VII. The Tender and the Graceful of Racine is sometimes to be found in Corneille: The Grand and Sublime of Corneille is never to be found in Racine.

VIII. Racine has painted only the French and the present age, even when he designed to paint another age, and other nations: We see in Corneille, all those ages and all those nations, that he intended to paint.

IX. The number of the pieces of Corneille is much greater than that of Racine: Corneille, notwithstanding, has made fewer tautologies and repetitions than Racine has made.

X. In the passages where the versification of Corneille is good, it is more bold, more noble, and, at the same time, as pure and as finished as that of Racine; but it is not preserved in this degree of beauty; and that of Racine is always equally supported.

XI. Authors

thing in Boileau's Art of Poetry : from which, however, POPE has borrowed many observations.

37. The mighty STAGYRITE first left the shore,
Spread all his sails, and durst the deep explore.
He steer'd securely and discover'd far,
Led by the light of the Mæonian star *.

A NOBLE

XI. Authors inferior to Racine have written successfully after him, in his own way : No author, not even Racine himself, dared to attempt, after Corneille, that kind of writing which was peculiar to him.

This comparison, of the justness of which the reader is left to judge, is said greatly to have irritated Boileau, the inviolable friend and defender of Racine. It may be remarked, that Boileau had mentioned Fontenelle with contempt, in a stanza that originally concluded his Ode to the King; at present omitted. These were the lines.

J' aime mieux nouvel Icare
Dans les airs cherchant Pindare
Tomber du ciel le plus haut;
Que louer de Fontenelle,
Razer, craintive hirondelle,
La terre, comme Perault.

This ode was parodied in France; but not with such incomparable humour, as by our Prior, in England.

To these remarks of Fontenelle may be added what Voltaire says, with his usual vivacity and brevity; " Corneille alone formed himself; but Louis XIV. Colbert, Sophocles, and Euripides, all of them contributed to form Racine."

* Ver. 646.

A NOBLE and just character of the first and the best of critics! And sufficient to repress the fashionable and nauseous petulance of several impertinent moderns, who have attempted to discredit this great and useful writer. Whoever surveys the variety and perfection of his productions, all delivered in the chastest style, in the clearest order, and the most pregnant brevity, is amazed at the immensity of his genius. His logic, however, at present neglected for those redundant and verbose systems, which took their rise from Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, is a mighty effort of the mind: in which are discovered the principal sources of the art of reasoning, and the dependencies of one thought on another; and where, by the different combinations he hath made of all the forms the understanding can assume in reasoning, which he hath traced for it, he hath so closely confined it, that it cannot depart from them, without arguing inconsequentially. His Physics contain many useful observations, particularly his History of Animals; to assist him in which, Alexander gave orders, that creatures of different climates and countries should, at a great expence, be brought to him, to pass under his inspection. His Morals are perhaps the purest system in antiquity. His Politics are a most valuable monument of the civil wisdom of the ancients; as they preserve to us the description of several governments, and particularly of Crete and Carthage, that otherwise would have been unknown.

unknown. But of all his compositions, his Rhetoric and Poetics are most complete. No writer has shewn a greater penetration into the recesses of the human heart, than this philosopher, in the second book of his Rhetoric; where he treats of the different manners and passions, that distinguish each different age and condition of man; and from whence Horace plainly took his famous description, in the art of Poetry * La Bruyere, Rochefoucault, and Montaigne himself, are not to be compared to him in this respect. No succeeding writer on eloquence, not even Tully, has added any thing new or important on this subject. His Poetics, which I suppose are here by POPE chiefly referred to, seem to have been written for the use of that prince, with whose education Aristotle was honoured, to give him a just taste in reading Homer and the tragedians: to judge properly of which, was then thought no unnecessary accomplishment in the character of a prince. To attempt to understand poetry without having diligently digested this treatise, would be as absurd and impossible, as to pretend to a skill in geometry, without having studied Euclid. The fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters, wherein he has pointed out the properest methods of exciting **TERROR** and **PITY**, convince us, that he was intimately acquainted with those objects, which most forcibly affect the heart. The prime excellence of this precious treatise is the scholastic

* Ver. 157.

lastic precision, and philosophical closeness, with which the subject is handled, without any address to the passions, or imagination. It is to be lamented, that the part of the Poetics in which he had given precepts for comedy, did not likewise descend to posterity.

38. HORACE still charms with graceful negligence,
And without method talks us into sense *.

THE vulgar notion, that Horace wrote his Epistle to the Pisos without method, has been lately confuted, as we hinted before. It is equally false that, that epistle contains a complete Art of Poetry; it being solely confined to the state and defects of the Roman drama. The transitions in the writings of Horace, are some of the most exquisite strokes of his art: many of them pass at present unobserved; and that his cotemporaries were equally blind to this beauty, he himself complains, though with a seeming irony,

Cum lamentamur, non APPARERE labores
Nostros, et TENUI deducta poemata filo *.

IT seems also to be another common mistake, that one of Horace's characteristics is the SUBLIME: of which indeed he has given a very few strokes, and those taken from Pindar, and, probably, from Alcæus.

* Ver. 654.

† Epist. I. ver. 224. lib. 2.

us *. His excellence lay in exquisite observations on human life, and in touching the foibles of mankind with delicacy and urbanity. 'Tis easy to perceive this moral turn in all his compositions: the writer of the epistles is discerned in the odes. Elegance, not sublimity, was his grand characteristic. Horace is the most popular author of all antiquity; the reason is, because he abounds in images drawn from familiar life, and in remarks, that "come home to mens "business and bosoms." Hence he is more frequently quoted and alluded to, than any poet of a higher cast.

39. See DIONYSIUS Homer's thoughts refine,
And call new beauties forth from ev'ry line †.

THESE prosaic lines, this spiritless eulogy, are much below the merit of the critic whom they are intended to celebrate. POPE seems here rather to have considered Dionysius, as the author only of reflections concerning Homer; and to have in some measure overlooked, or at least not to have sufficiently insisted on, his most excellent book, ΠΕΡΙ ΣΤΝΘΗΣΕΩΣ ΟΝΟΜΑΤΩΝ, in which he has unfolded all the secret

* "De Horatio quidem ita sentimus; si Græcorum Lyrica extarent, futurum, ut illius furta quamplurima deprehenderentur: qui tamen imitatores *servum pecus* appellare non dubitavit.—Ex Alcæo, ut opinor, [Horatii] multa, &c." Scaliger. *Pet. L. 5. c. 7.*

† Ver. 666.

cret arts that render composition harmonious. One part of this discourse, I mean from the beginning of the twenty-first to the end of the twenty-fourth Section, is perhaps one of the most useful pieces of criticism extant. He there discusses the three different species of composition; which he divides into the NERVOUS and AUSTERE, the SMOOTH and FLORID, and the MIDDLE, which partakes of the nature of the two others. As examples of the first species, he mentions Antimachus and Empedocles in heroics, Pindar, in lyric, Eschylus in tragic poetry, and Thucydides in history. As examples of the second, he produces Hesiod as a writer in heroics; Sappho, Anacreon, and Simonides, in lyric; Euripides ONLY, among tragic writers; among the historians, Ephorus, and Theopompus; and Isocrates, among the rhetoricians: all these, says he, have used words that are ΛΕΙΑ, καὶ ΜΑΛΑΚΑ, καὶ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΩΠΙΑ. The writers which he alledges as instances of the third species, who have happily blended the two other species of composition, and who are the most complete models of style, are, Homer in epic poetry; Stesichorus and Alcæus in lyric; in tragic, Sophocles; in history, Herodotus; in eloquence, Demosthenes; in philosophy, Democritus, Plato and Aristotle.

40. Fancy and art in gay PETRONIUS please,
The scholar's learning with the courtier's ease*.

FOR

FOR what merit Petronius should be placed among useful critics, I could never discern. There are not above two or three pages, containing critical remarks, in his work : the chief merit of which is that of telling a story with grace and ease. His own style is more affected than even that of his cotemporaries, when the Augustan simplicity was laid aside. Many of his metaphors are far-fetched, and mixed; of which this glaring instance may be alledged. “ Neque
“ concipere aut edere partum mens potest, nisi ingen-
“ ti flumine literarum inundata * :” where animal conception and delivery, are confounded with vegetable production. His character of Horace, however celebrated, and so often quoted as to become nauseous, “ *Horatii curiosa felicitas*,” is surely a very unclassical inversion; for he ought to have called it the *happy carefulness* of Horace, rather than his *careful happiness*. I shall observe by the way, that the copy of this author found some years ago, bears many signatures of its spuriousness, and particularly of its being forged by a Frenchman. For we have this expression, “ ad CASTELLA sese receperunt,” that is, “ to their CHATEAUX,” instead of ad *Villas*.”

41. In grave QUINTILIAN's copious work we find
The justest rules, and clearest method join'd †.

To commend Quintilian barely for his method,

* Pag. 109. Ed. Amstærl. 1663.

† Ver. 669.

thod, and to insist merely on this excellence, is below the merit of one of the most rational and elegant of Roman writers. Considering the nature of Quintilian's subject, he afforded copious matter, for a more appropriated and poetical character. No author ever adorned a scientific treatise with so many beautiful metaphors. Quintilian was found in the bottom of a tower of the monastery of St. Gal, by Poggius; as appears by one of his letters dated 1417, written from Constance, when the council was then sitting. The monastery was about twenty miles from that city. Silius Italicus, and Valerius Flaccus, were found at the same time and place. A history of the manner by which the manuscripts of ancient authors were found, would be an entertaining work to persons of literary curiosity.

42. Thee, bold LONGINUS, all the Nine inspire,
And bless their critic with a poet's fire *.

THIS abrupt address to Longinus is more spirited and striking, and more suitable to the character of the person addressed, than if he had coldly spoken of him in the third person. The taste and sensibility of Longinus were exquisite; but his observations are too general, and his method too loose. The precision of the true philosophical critic is lost in the declamation of the florid rhetorician. Instead of shewing for what reason a sentiment or image is *SUBLIME*, and discovering

discovering the secret power by which they affect a reader with pleasure, he is ever intent on producing something *SUBLIME himself*, and strokes of his *own* eloquence. Instead of pointing out the foundation of the grandeur of Homer's imagery, where he describes the motion of Neptune, the critic is endeavouring to rival the poet, by saying that, "there was not room enough in the whole earth, to take such another step." He should have shewn why the speech of Phaeton to his son, in a fragment of Euripides, was so lively and picturesque: instead of which he ardently exclaims, "would not you say, that the soul of the writer ascended the chariot with the driver, and was whirled along in the same flight and danger with the rapid horses?" We have lately seen a just specimen of the genuine method of criticising, in Mr. Harris's accurate Discourse on Poetry, Painting, and Music. I have frequently wondered, that Longinus, who mentions Tully, should have taken no notice of Virgil. I suppose he thought him only a servile copier of the Greeks.

43. From the same foes, at last, both felt their doom,
And the same age saw learning fall and Rome *.

"TWAS the fate of Rome to have scarce an intermediate age, or single period of time, between the
rise

rise of arts and fall of liberty. No sooner had that nation begun to lose the roughness and barbarity of their manners, and learn of Greece to form their heroes, their orators, and poets on a right model, than by their unjust attempt upon the liberty of the world, they justly lost their own. With their liberty, they lost not only their force of eloquence, but even their style and language itself. The poets, who afterwards arose among them, were mere unnatural and forced plants. Their two most finished, who came last, and closed the scene, were plainly such as had seen the days of liberty, and felt the sad effects of its departure *."

SHAFTESBURY proceeds to observe, that when despotism was fully established, not a statue, picture, or medal, not a tolerable piece of architecture, afterwards appeared.—And it was, I may add, the opinion of Longinus, and Addison, who adopted it from him, that arbitrary governments were pernicious to the fine arts, as well as to the sciences. Modern history, however, has afforded an example to the contrary. Painting, sculpture, and music, have been seen to arrive to a high perfection in Rome, notwithstanding the slavery and superstition that reign there: nay, superstition itself has been highly productive of these fine arts; for with what enthusiasm must a popish painter work for an altar-piece? There have been

* ADVICE to an Auth. Vol. i. pag. 148. Edit. 12mo.

been instances of painters, who before they began to work, have always received the sacrament. Neither Dante, Ariosto, nor Tasso, flourished in free governments; and it seems * chimerical to assert, that Milton would never have written his *Paradise Lost*, if he had not seen monarchy destroyed, and the state thrown into disorder. Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Julio Romano, lived in despotic states. The fine arts, in short, are naturally attendant upon power and luxury. But the sciences require unlimited freedom, to raise them to their full vigour and growth. In a MONARCHY, there may be poets, painters, and musicians; but orators, historians, and philosophers, can exist in a REPUBLIC alone.

44. A second deluge learning thus o'er-run,
And the monks finish'd what the Goths begun †.

EVERY custom and opinion that can degrade and deform humanity, was to be found in the times here alluded to. The most cruel tyranny, and the grossest superstition, reigned without controul. Men seemed to have lost not only the light of learning, but of their common reason. Duels, divinations, the ordeal, and all the oppressive customs of the feudal laws, were universally practiced: witchcraft, possessions,

* See *ENQUIRY* into the Life and Writings of Homer, Sect. v. pag. 67.

† Ver. 692.

sions, revelations, and astrology *, were generally believed. The † clergy were so ignorant, that in some of the most solemn acts of synods, such words as these are to be found: “ *As my lord bishop cannot write himself, at his request I have subscribed.*” They were at that time so profligate, as to publish Absolutions for any one who had killed his father, mother, sister, or wife; or had committed the most enormous pollutions. On a survey of these absurd abominations, one is apt to cry out in the emphatical words of Lucretius,

Quæ procul a NOBIS flectat Fortuna gubernans!

But we may rest secure, if the observation of an acute writer be true, who says, “ Europe will perhaps behold ages of a bad taste, but will never again relapse into barbarism. The sole invention of printing has forbidden

* Even so late as the reign of Charles V. we are informed by Christina of Pisa, that her father, who was the king’s astrologer, foretold his death to a moment, in the year 1380. This astrologer was so highly in favour, and esteemed of such importance, as to have a monthly pension of an hundred livres; a considerable sum for that time.

† They celebrated in many churches, particularly at Rouen, what was called, the FEAST OF THE ASS. On this occasion, the Ass, finely drest, was brought before the altar, and they sung before him this elegant anthem, “ *Eh eh eh Sire ANE!*” “ *eh eh eh Sire ANE!*”

forbidden that event *." The only sparks of literature that then remained, were to be found among the mahometans, and not the christians. It was from the ARABIANS that we received astronomy, chemistry, medicine, algebra, and arithmetic. Albategni, a Saracen, some of whose manuscripts are now repositèd in the Bodleian library at Oxford, made astronomical observations in the year 880. Our Almanack, AL-MANAC, is an Arabic word. The great church at Cordova in Spain, where the Saracens kept a magnificent court, is a monument of their skill in architecture. The game of chess, that admirable effort of the human mind, was by them invented; as were tilts and tournaments. Averroes translated, and commented upon, the greatest part of Aristotle's works *, and was the introducer of that author's philosophy into the † west. It was Gerbert, who, in the reign of Hugh Capet, is said to have introduced into France, the Arabian and Indian cypher: for the Arabians had borrowed from the Indians

* Mes PENSÉES, par M. Beaumelle, cccclxv.

† I have seen a translation of his Comment on the Poetics, with this title. "AVERROYS Summa in Aristotelis Poeticam; ex Arabico sermone in Latinum traducta ab Herimano Alemanno. Præmittitur Determinatio IBINROSDIN [*another Arabian writer*] in Poetria Aristotelis. Venetiis, apud Georgium Arrivabenum, 1515."

‡ From Sadi, an Arabian Poet, Milton took the grand idea of the bridge over chaos.

dians this manner of computing, and Gerbert learned it from the Saracens, when he had made a journey into Spain. Gerbert also undertook to make the first clock, the motion of which was regulated by a balance; which method was made use of till the year 1650, when they began to place a pendulum instead of the balance. "Can it be believed, says Mr. Henault, that there ever was so little intercourse between the provinces of France, that an abbot of Clugni, being invited by Bouchard Count of Paris, to bring his Religious to St. Maurdes-Fossés, excused himself from making so long a journey, into a country UNKNOWN, and to which he was so much a STRANGER?" Charlemagne, indeed, two centuries before this last mentioned time, had endeavoured to bring civility and learning into France: he introduced the Gregorian chant, and established a * school in his palace, where the famous Alcuin, whom he invited from England, instructed the Youth. Each of the members of this academy took a particular name; and Charlemagne himself, who did it the honour to become one of its members, assumed that of David. This attempt to civilize his barbarous subjects, was as arduous, and worthy his great genius, as his noble project to open a communication between the Ocean and

* He is said to have founded the university of Paris. Twyne's Antiq. Acad. Oxon. Apolog. edit. 1608. pag. 158, et seq.

and the Euxine Sea, and to join the Rhine to the Danube by a canal.

45. At length ERASMUS, that great, injur'd name,
(The glory of the priesthood, and the shame!)
Stem'd the wild torrent of a barb'rous age,
And drove those holy Vandals off the stage *.

It were to be wished, our author had drawn a larger and fuller portrait of this wonderful man, of whom he appears to have been so fond, as to declare in the Letters †, that he had some design of writing his life in latin. I call Erasmus a wonderful man, not only on account of the variety, and classical purity of his works, but of that penetration, that strong and acute sense, which enabled him to pierce through the absurdities of the times, and expose them with such poignant ridicule, and attic elegance. A work of humour, and of humour directed to expose the priests, in that age, was indeed a prodigy. The irony of the Encomium on Folly has never been excelled. Erasmus, though a commentator, had taste; and tho' a catholic, had charity. His learning was enlivened with wit; and his orthodoxy was tempered with moderation. He was never dazzled with what was called ERUDITION; or misled by that blind and undistinguishing veneration which was naturally paid to the ancients, on the first discovery of their writings.

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By his Ciceronianus, he expressed the affectation of imitating Tully's manner of expression, in every species of composition. In his ECCLESIASTES, very excellent rules are laid down for preaching. In his DIALOGUES, the superstitions of the Romish church are exposed with all the pleasantry of Lucian: an author to whom his genius bore great resemblance; and some of whose dialogues he has translated with their original spirit. Indeed, among the many translators of Greek authors who flourished at that time, Erasmus seems to have been in all respects the most eminent. To him was the restoration of literature principally owing. More than one prince solicited his friendship, and invited him to their courts. We see in a letter of Erasmus, written in the year 1516, that Francis I. who shared with Leo X. the glory of reviving sciences and arts in Europe, having declared to Petit his confessor, that he intended to bring into France the most learned men he could find, Petit had charged Budæus, and Cop the royal physician, to write to Erasmus, to engage him to settle in France: that Stephen Poncher, ambassador from the king at Brussels, pressed him still more; but that Erasmus made his excuses, because his catholic majesty Charles V. had retained him in the Low-countries. The life of Erasmus, which deserves the finest pen, has been wretchedly and frigidly written by Knight; although, indeed, the materials he has collected are curious and useful.

46. But see! each muse in Leo's golden days,
Starts from her trance, and trims her wither'd bays,
Rome's ancient Genius, o'er its ruin spread,
Shakes off the dust, and rears his rev'rend head *.

HISTORY has recorded five ages of the world, in which the human mind has exerted itself in an extraordinary manner; and in which its productions in literature and the fine arts have arrived at a perfection, not equalled in other periods. The FIRST, is the age of Philip and Alexander; about which time flourished Socrates, Plato, Demosthenes, Aristotle, Lyfippus, Apelles, Phidias, Praxiteles, Thucydides, Xenophon, Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Menander, Philemon. The SECOND age, which has never yet been sufficiently taken notice of, was that of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Ægypt; in which appeared Lycophron, Aratus, Nicander, Apollonius Rhodius, Theocritus, Callimachus, Eratosthenes, Philichus, Erifiltratus the physician, Timæus the historian, Cleanthes, Diogenes the painter, and Sostrates the architect. This prince, from his love of learning, commanded the Old Testament to be translated into Greek. The THIRD age is that of Julius Cæsar, and Augustus; marked with the illustrious names of Laberius, Catullus, Lucretius, Cicero, Livy, Varro, Virgil, Horace, Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid, Phædrus, Vitruvius, Dioscorides.

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des.

* Ver. 698.

des. The FOURTH age was that of Julius II. and Leo X. which produced, Ariosto, Tasso, Fracastorius, Sannazarius, Vida, Bembo, Sadolet, Machiavel, Guiccardin, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Titian. The FIFTH age, is that of Louis XIV. in France, and of king William and queen Anne in England : in which, or thereabouts, are to be found, Corneille, Moliere, Racine, Boileau, Fontaine, Bossuet, Rochefoucault, Paschal, Bourdaloue, Patruë, Malbranche, De Retz, Bruyere, St. Real, Fenelon, Lully, Le Sæur, Pouffin, Le Brun, Puget, Theodon, Gerardon, Edelinck, Nanteuill, * Perrault, Dryden, Tillotson, Temple, POPE, Addison, Garth, Congreve, Rowe, Prior, Lee, Swift, Bolingbroke, Atterbury, Boyle, Locke, Newton, Clarke, Kneller, Thornhill, Jervas, Purcell, Mead, Friend.

CONCERNING the particular encouragement given by Leo X. to polite literature, and the fine arts, I forbear to enlarge ; because a friend of mine is at present engaged in writing, THE HISTORY OF THE AGE OF LEO X. It is a noble period, and full of those most important events, which have had the greatest influence on human affairs. Such as the discovery of the West-Indies, by the Spaniards, and of a passage to the East, by the Portuguese : the invention of printing ; the reformation of religion ; with many others :

* The Architect.

others: all which will be insisted upon at large, and their consequences displayed. I shall only here transiently observe, that some efforts to emerge from barbarity had long before this time appeared in Italy. Dante wrote his sublime * and original poem, which is a kind of satirical epic, and which abounds in images and sentiments equal to the best of Homer, but whose works he had never seen, about the year 1310. Giotto the disciple of Cimabue, the friend of Dante, and subject of his praises, was employed, about the same time, by Benenedict XI; and a picture of mosaic work done by him, over the gate of St. Peter's church at Rome, is still remaining, a Tuscan, called Gue of Arezzo, invented the musical notes in use at present † and Brunelesci built palaces at Florence, in the style of ancient architecture. Soon afterwards, Boccace and Petrarch polished, and fixed the standard of, the Italian language ‡. To Petrarch

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the

* See particularly the beginning of the third canto of the *INFERNO*, as also the beginning of the sixth.

† “Veggiamo in un medesimo prodeffo di tempo (dal regno principalmente dell'una, e dell' altra Sicilia, e poi della Lombardia, e de vari, e distinti luoghi d' Italia) forgere scrittori, i quali anno favella con Dante, Petrarca, Boccacio, ed altri Toscani autori commune, e con loro anche commune l' autorità, da ogni regulator dalla lingua riconosciuta, i quali, tra molti altri, furrono Guidotto Bolognese, Marco Polo Veneziano, Pier Crescenzia da Bologna, Guido Giudice Messinese, Giacopo Colonna Romano, Frederico II. imperadore, Pier delle Vigne Capoano,

the honour is generally attributed of having restored the elegance of the Latin tongue ; particularly in poetry. But a late acute searcher into antiquity, whose death is justly lamented, the learned Scipio Maffei, has informed us * in a curious passage, that this was not so much owing to Petrarch, as to Albertino Mussato, a native of Padua : with whose merit the learned seem not to be sufficiently acquainted. Mussato died very old, after having borne the greatest offices in his country, in the year 1329, that is to say, thirty-five years before Petrarch. He wrote not only many books of a history of his own times, but also an heroic poem on the siege of Padua, by the Veronese, under the great Can ; together with eclogues, elegies, epistles in verse, and an Ovidian Cento. However, to form a full judgment in this case, one need only peruse his two latin tragedies entitled *ECCEPINIS*, and *ACHILLES*, which he composed in the style and manner of Seneca : and which were the first regular and perfect dramas, that are to be found since the barbarous and obscure ages.

47. Immortal

Capoano, Benvenuto da Imola, Fra Jacopone da Todi, Onesto Bolognese, Guido Guisleri, Semprebene, Fabrovio, Guido Guisleri, Jacopo della Lana, Giotto Mantovano."

Gravina della Rag. Poet. lib. ii. pag. 170.

* *TEATRO Italiano*. In Verona, 1723. tom. i. pag. 4.

47. Immortal VIDA ; on whose honour'd brow
The Poet's bays, and Critic's ivy grow *.

THE merits of Vida seem not to have been particularly attended to in England, 'till POPE had bestowed this commendation upon him : although the Poetics had been correctly published at Oxford, by Basil Kennet, some time before. The SILK WORMS of Vida are written with classical purity, and with classical purity, and with a just mixture of the styles of Lucretius and Virgil. It was a happy choice to write a poem on CHESS ; nor is the execution less happy. The various stratagems, and manifold intricacies of this ingenious game, so difficult to be described in latin, are here expressed with the greatest perspicuity and elegance ; so that perhaps the game might be learned from this description. Amidst many prosaic flatnesses, there are many fine strokes in the CHRISTIAD : particularly, his angels, with respect to their persons and insignia, are drawn with that dignity, which we so much admire in Milton ; who seems to have had his eye on those passages.

* Gravina applauds Vida, for having found out a method to introduce the whole history of our Saviour's life, by putting it into the mouth of St. Joseph and St. John, who relate it to Pilate. But surely this speech, consisting of as many lines as that of Dido to Æneas,

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was

* Ver. 706.

† Della Ragion. Poet. pag. 127.

was too long to be made on such an occasion ; when Christ was brought before the tribunal of Pilate, to be judged and condemned to death. The Poetics are perhaps the most perfect of his compositions : they are excellently translated by Pitt. Vida had formed himself upon Virgil, who is therefore his hero : he has too much depreciated Homer. Although his precepts principally regard epic poetry, yet many of them are applicable to every species of composition. This poem has the praise of being one of the * first, if not the very first pieces of criticism, that appeared in Italy, since the revival of learning : for it was finished, as is evident from a short advertisement prefixed to it, in the year 1520. It is remarkable, that most of the great poets about this time, wrote an art of poetry. Trissino, a name respected for giving to Europe the first regular epic poem, and for first daring to throw off the bondage of rhyme, published at Vicenza, in the year 1529, *DELLA POETICA, divisioni quattro*, several years before his *Italia Liberata*. We have of Fracastorius, NAUGERIUS, *five de Poetica dialogus*, Venetiis, 1555. Minturnus, DE POETA, *libri sex*, appeared at Venice, 1559. Bernardo Tasso, the father of Torquato, and author of an epic poem entiled *L'Amadigi*, wrote *RAGIONAMENTO della Poesia*, printed at Venice, 1562. And

* Victorius's latin translation of Aristotle's Poetics, was published at Florence, 1560. Castlevetro's Italian one at Vienna, 1570.

And to pay the highest honour to criticism, the great Torquato Tasso himself wrote *DISCORSI del Poema Eroico*, printed at Venice, 1587. These discourses are full of learning and taste. But I must not omit a curious anecdote, which * Menage has given us in his *Anti-Baillet*; namely that Sperone claimed these discourses as his own: for he thus speaks of them in one of his letters to Felice Paciotto; “*Laudo voi infinitamente di voler scrivere della poetica; della quale interrogato molto fiate dal Tasso †, e rispondogli io liberamente, si come foglio, egli n’a fatto un volume, e mandato al Signior Scipio Gonzaga per cosa sua, e non mea: ma io ne chiarirò il mondo.*”

48. And BOILEAU still in right of Horace sways ‡.

MAY I be pardoned for declaring it as my opinion, that Boileau’s is the best § *Art of Poetry* extant? The brevity of his precepts, enlivened by proper imagery, the justness of his metaphors, the harmony of his numbers, as far as alexandrine lines will admit, the exactness of his method, the perspicacity of his

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remarks,

* *Tomp. ii., pag. 353.*

† It may be remarked, as an instance of Tasso’s JUDGEMENT, that he himself did not approve the episode of Sophronia and Olindo, so commonly censured.

‡ *Ver. 715.*

§ It was translated into Portuguese verse, by Count d’Ericeyra.

remarks, and the energy of his style, all duly considered, may render this opinion not unreasonable. It is scarcely to be conceived, how much is comprehended in four short cantos *. He that has well digested these, cannot be said to be ignorant of any important rule of poetry. The tale of the physician turning architect, in the fourth canto, is told with vast pleasantry. It is to this work Boileau owes his immortality : which was of the highest utility to his nation, in diffusing a just way of thinking and writing, banishing every species of false wit, and introducing a general taste for the manly simplicity of the ancients, on whose writings this poet had formed his taste. Boileau's chief talent was the DIDACTIC. His fancy was not the predominant faculty of his mind. Fontenelle has thus characterised him. " Il étoit grand et excellent versificateur, pourvu cependant que cette louange se renferme dans ses beaux jours, dont la différence avec les autres est bien marquée, et faisoit souvent dire *Helas ! et Hola !* mais il n'étoit pas grand poète, si l'on entend par ce mot, comme on le doit, celui qui FAIT, qui INVENTE, qui CREE †."

49. Such was the muse, whose rules and practice tell,

" Nature's chief master-piece is writing well †."

THIS

* It is remarkable, Boileau declared he had never read Vida.

† Oeuvres de Fontenelle. Tom. iii. pag. 376. à Paris, 1752.

† Ver. 724.

THIS high panegyric procured to POPE the acquaintance, and afterwards, the constant friendship, of the duke of Buckingham: who, in his ESSAY here alluded to, has followed the method of Boileau, in discoursing on the various species of poetry, to no other purpose than to manifest his own inferiority. The piece is, indeed, of the satyric, rather than of the preceptive, kind. The coldness and neglect with which this writer, formed only on the French critics, speaks of Milton, must be considered as proofs of his want of critical discernment, or of critical courage. I can recollect no performance of Buckingham that stamps him a true genius. His reputation was owing to his rank. In reading his poems, one is apt to exclaim with our author,

What woful stuff this madrigal would be,
In some starv'd hackney sonneteer or me?
But let a LORD, ONCE own the happy lines,
How the wit brightens! how the style refines!
Before his sacred name flies every fault,
And each exalted stanza teems with thought.

THE best part of Buckingham's ESSAY is that, in which he gives a ludicrous account of the plan of modern tragedy. I should add that his compliment to POPE, prefixed to his poems, contains a pleasing picture of the sedateness and retirement proper to age, after the tumults of public life; and by its moral turn,

turn, breathes the spirit, if not of a poet, yet of an amiable old Man.

50. Such was Roscommon *. — — —

AN ESSAY on Translated Verse seems at first sight to be a barren subject ; yet Roscommon has decorated it with many precepts of utility and taste, and enlivened it with a tale, in imitation of Boileau. It is indisputably better written than the last-mentioned ESSAY. Roscommon was more learned than Buckingham. He was bred under Bochart at Caen in Normandy. He had laid a design of forming a society for the refining, and fixing the standard of our language : in which project, his intimate friend Dryden was a principal assistant. This was the first attempt of that sort ; and, I fear, we shall never see another set on foot in our days : even though Mr. Johnson has lately given us so excellent a dictionary. It may be remarked to the praise of Roscommon, that he was the first critic who had taste and spirit enough, publicly to praise the *Paradise Lost* ; with a noble encomium of which, and a rational recommendation of blank verse, he concludes his performance. Fenton, in his *Observations on Waller*, has accurately delineated his character. “ His imagination might have probably been more fruitful,

fruitful, and sprightly, if his judgment had been less severe: but that severity, delivered in a masculine, clear, succinct style, contributed to make him so eminent in the didactical manner, that no man with justice can affirm, he was ever equalled by any of our own nation, without confessing at the same time, that he is inferior to none. In some other kinds of writing, his genius seems to have wanted fire to attain the point of perfection: but who can attain it *?"

§1. Such late was WALSH, the muse's judge and friend †.

IF POPE has here given too magnificent an eulogy to Walsh, it must be attributed to friendship, rather than to judgment. Walsh was in general a slimy and frigid writer. The Rambler calls his works PAGES OF INANITY. His three letters to POPE, however, are well written. His remarks on the nature of pastoral poetry, on borrowing from the ancients, and against florid conceits, are worthy perusal ‡. POPE owed much to Walsh: it was he gave him a very important piece of advice, in his early youth; for he used to tell our author, that there was one way still left open for him, by which he might excel any of his predecessors, which was, by CORRECTNESS; that though indeed we had several great

* Edit. 12mo. pag. 136.

† Ver. 730.

‡ Vol. 7. pag. 67. &c.

great poets, we as yet could boast of none that were perfectly CORRECT; and that therefore, he advised him to make this quality his particular study.

CORRECTNESS is a vague term, frequently used without meaning and precision. It is perpetually the nauseous cant of the French critics, and of their advocates and pupils, that the English writers are generally INCORRECT. If CORRECTNESS implies an absence of petty faults, this perhaps may be granted. If it means that, because their tragedians have avoided the irregularities of Shakespeare, and have observed a juster œconomy in their fables, therefore the *Athalie*, for instance, is preferable to *Lear*, the notion is groundless and absurd. The *Henriade* is free from any very gross faults; but who will dare to rank it with the *Paradise Lost*? The declamations with which some of their most perfect tragedies abound, may be reckoned as contrary to the nature of that species of poetry, and as destructive of its end, as the foils or grave-diggers of Shakespeare. That the French may boast some excellent critics, particularly Bossu, Boileau, Fenelon, and Brumoy, cannot be denied; but that these are sufficient to form a taste upon, without having recourse to the genuine fountains of all polite literature, I mean the Grecian writers, no one but a superficial sciologist can allow.

I CONCLUDE

I CONCLUDE these reflections with a remarkable fact. In no polished nation, after criticism has been much studied, and the rules of writing established, has any very extraordinary work ever appeared. This has visibly been the case, in Greece, in Rome, and in France ; after Aristotle, Horace, and Boileau, had written their ARTS OF POETRY. In our own country, the rules of the drama, for instance, were never more completely understood than at present : yet what UNINTERESTING, though FAULTLESS, tragedies, have we lately seen ? So much better is our judgment than our execution. How to account for the fact here mentioned, adequately and justly, would be attended with all those difficulties that await discussions relative to the productions of the human mind ; and to the delicate and secret causes that influence them. Whether or no, the natural powers be not confined and debilitated by that timidity and caution which has spread itself from the sciences even into polite literature, by consulting only REASON, has not diminished and destroyed SENTIMENT ; and made our poets write from and to the HEAD rather than the HEART : or whether, lastly, when just models, from which the rules have necessarily been drawn, have once appeared, succeeding writers, by ambitiously endeavouring to surpass those just models, and to be original and new, do not become distorted and unnatural, in their thoughts and diction.

S E C T. IV.

Of the RAPE of the LOCK.

IF the Moderns have excelled the Ancients in any species of writing, it seems to be in satire: and, particularly in that kind of satire, which is conveyed in the form of the epopee, a pleasing vehicle of satire never used by the ancients; for we know so little of the Margites of Homer, that it cannot be produced as an example. As the poet disappears in this way of writing, and does not deliver the intended censure in his own proper person, the satire becomes more delicate, because more oblique. Add to this, that a tale or story more strongly engages and interests the reader, than a series of precepts or reproofs, or even of characters themselves, however lively and natural. An heroi-comic poem may therefore be justly esteemed the most excellent kind of satire.

THE invention of it is usually ascribed to Alessandro Tassoni; who in the year 1622, published at Paris, a poem composed by him, in a few months of the year 1611, entitled LA SECCHIA RAPITA, or *The Rape of the Bucket*. To avoid giving offence, it was first printed under the name of Androvini Melisogni. It was afterwards reprinted at Venice, corrected, with the name of the author, and with some illustrations of Gasparo Salviani. But the learned

ed and curious Crescembini, in his *Istoria della Volgare Poesia* *, informs us, that it is doubtful whether the invention of the † heroi-comic poem ought to be ascribed to Tassoni, or to Francesco Bracciolini, who wrote ‡ *LO SCHERNO DE GLI DEI*, which performance, though it was printed four years after *LA SECCHIA*, is nevertheless declared in an epistle prefixed, to have been written many years sooner. The real subject of Tassoni's poem was the war which the inhabitants of Modena declared against those of Bologna, on the refusal of the latter to restore to them some towns, which had been detained ever since the time of the emperor Frederic II. The author artfully made use of a popular tradition, according to which it was believed, that a certain wooden bucket, which is kept at Modena, in the treasury of the cathedral, came from Bologna, and that it had been forcibly taken away by the Modenese. Crescembini adds, that because Tassoni had severely ridiculed the Bolognese, Bartolomeo Bocchini, to revenge his countrymen, printed at Venice 1641, a tragico-heroi-comic poem, entitled *LE PAZZIE DE SAVI, ovvero, IL LAMBERTACCIO*, in which the Modenese are spoken of with much contempt. The Italians have a fine turn for works of humour in which they abound. They have

* Lib. i. pag. 78. In Roma, per il Chracas, 1698.

† E tal Poesia puo diffinirsi, e chiamarsi, immitazione d'azione seria fatto con riso. Crescembini, *ibid*.

‡ In Venetia, 1627. There is prefixed, by way of preface, a facetious dialogue betwixt Thalia and Urania.

have another poem of this species, called *MALMANTILE RACQUISTATO*, written by Lorenzo Lippi, in the year 1676, which Crescembini * highly commends, calling it, " *Spiritosissimo e legiadriissimo poemo ma giacoso.*" It was afterwards reprinted at Florence 1688, with the useful annotations of Puccio Lamoni, a Florentine painter, who was himself no contemptible poet.

THE *LUTRIN* of Boileau was the second remarkable poem, in which the Serious and Comic were happily blended. Boileau himself has given a circumstantial account of what gave occasion to this poem: which account, because it is entertaining, and not printed in the common editions of his works, I will insert at length. " I shall not here act like Ariosto, who frequently when he is going to relate the most absurd story in the world, solemnly protests it to be true, and supports it by the authority of archbishop Turpin. For my part I freely declare, the whole poem of the *DESK* is nothing but pure fiction; that it is all invented, even to the name itself of the place where the action passes. An odd occasion gave rise to this poem. In a company I was lately engaged in, the conversation turned upon epic poetry: every one delivered his opinion, according to his abilities; when mine was asked, I confirmed what I had advanced in my *Art of Poetry*, that an heroic poem, to be truly excellent,

* Pag. 368. lib. 5.

excellent, ought to be charged with little MATTER, which it was the business of invention to support and extend. The opinion was warmly contested; but after many reasons for and against, it happened, as it generally does in this sort of disputes, that nobody was convinced, and that each continued in his own opinion. The heat of dispute being over, we talked on other subjects; and laughed at the violence into which we had been betrayed, in discussing a question of so little consequence. We moralized on the folly of men who pass almost their whole lives, in treating the greatest trifles in a serious manner; and in making to themselves an important affair of something quite indifferent. To this purpose, a country gentleman related a famous quarrel, that had lately happened in a little church in his province, between the treasurer and the chantor, the two principal dignitaries of that church, about the place in which a reading-desk was to stand. We thought it a droll affair. Upon this, one of the critics in company who could not so soon forget our late dispute, asked me, if I, who thought so little MATTER necessary for an heroic poem, would undertake to write one on a quarrel so little abounding in incidents, as this of the two ecclesiastics. “*J’eus plutôt dit, pourquoi non? que je n’eus fait reflexion sur ce qu’il me demandoit.*” This made the company laugh, and I could not help laughing with them; not in the least imagining, that I should ever be able to keep my word. But finding myself

myself at leisure in the evening, I revolved the subject in my mind, and having considered in every view the pleasantry that it would admit of, I made twenty verses which I shewed to my friends. They were diverted with this beginning. The pleasure which I saw these gave them, induced me to write twenty more. Thus, from twenty verses to twenty, I lengthened the work to near nine hundred. This is the whole history of the trifle I now offer to the public.—It is a new kind of burlesque, which I have introduced into our language: for as in the other kind of burlesque, that of Scarron, Dido and Æneas spoke like fish-women and porters, in this of mine, a * clock-maker and his wife talk like Dido and Æneas. I do not know whether my poem will have all the qualities requisite to satisfy a reader: but I dare flatter myself, that it will at least be allowed to have the grace of novelty; because I do not conceive, that there are any works of this nature in our language; the *DEFAITES DES BOUTS RIMES* of Sarasin being rather a mere allegory than a poem, as this is.”

ON a subject seemingly so unpromising and incapable of ornament, has Boileau found a method of raising a poem full of beautiful imagery; which appears like that magnificent city †, which the greatest of princes caused to be built in a morass. Boileau

has

* Altered afterwards to a BARBER.

† Petersburg.

has enlivened this piece with many unexpected incidents and entertaining episodes;

Maxima de nihilo nascitur historia.

Prop.

Particularly that of the Perruquier, in the second canto, and of the Battle of the Books, in the fifth. The satire throughout is poignant, though polite, to the last degree. The indolence and luxury of the priests are ridiculed with the most artful delicacy. What a picture has he drawn of the chamber and bed of the treasurer, where every thing was calculated to promote and preserve inactivity and ease!

Dans le reduit obscur d'un alcove enfoncée *
S'eleve un lit de plume a grand frais amassée.
Quatre rideaux pompeux, par un double contour,
En défendent l'entrée à la clarté du jour.
Là, parmi les douceurs d'un tranquille silence,
Regne sur le dâvet une heureuse indolence.
C'est là que Prelat muni d'un déjeuner,
Dormant d'un léger somme, attendoit le dîner.
La jeunesse en sa fleur brille sur son visage,
Son menton sur son sein descend a double étage:
Et son corps ramassé dans sa courte grosseur,
Faits gémir les coussins soit sa molle épaisseur †.

The

* Compare with this the account of the Canon fed by his House-keeper, in *Gil Blas*.

† Chant. i.

The astonishment of Gilotin, the treasurer's almoner, to find that his master intends to go out before dinner, is extremely natural; and his remonstrances are inimitably droll and pertinent.

Lui montre le peril : Que midi va sonner :
Qu'il va faire, s'il sort, refroidir le dîner.

Quelle fureur, dit-il, quel aveugle caprice,
Quand le diner est prest, vous appelle a l'Office ?
De votre dignité soutenir mieux l'éclat.

Est-ce pour travailler que vous êtes Prélat ?

A quoi bon ce dégoût et ce zele inutile ?

Est-il donc pour jeuner Quatre temps, ou Vigile ?

Reprenez vous esprits, et souvenez-vous bien,

Qu'un diner rechauffé ne valut jamais rien *.

How admirably, is the character of an ignorant and eating priest, preserved in this speech of the sleek and pampered Canon Evrard, one of the drones, who,

— — In that exhaustless hive

On fat pluralities supinely thrive † !

Moi ? dit-il, qu'a mon âge Ecolier tout nouveau,

J'aïlle pour un Lutrin me troubler le cerveau ?

O le plaisant conseil ! non, non songeons a vivre,

Va maigrir, si tu veux, et secher sur un Livre.

Pour moi je lis la Bible autant que l'Alcoran :

Je sai ce qu'un Fermier nous doit rendre par an :

Sur quelle vigne a Rheims nous avons hypothèque ;

Vingt muids rangez chez moi sont ma Bibiliotheque.

* Chant. 1.

† 1 s 1 s.

En plaçant un Popitre on croit nous rabbaïsser,
 Mon bras seul sans Latin saura le renverser.
 Que m'importe qu'Arnauld me condamne ou m'approuve ?
 J'abbats ce que me nuit par tout où je le trouve.
 C'est la mon sentiment. A quoi bon taut d'apprêts ?
 Du reste déjeunons, Messieurs, et beuvons frais *.

HIS knowledge of the rents of his church, and of the mortgages belonging to it, his scorn of the pious and laborious Arnauld, his contempt of learning, and, above all, his ruling passion of good-eating, are strokes highly comic. It is wonderful the ecclesiastics of France were not as much irritated by the publication of the *LUTRIN*, as by the *TARTUFFE* of Moliere ; which was suppressed by their interest, after it had been acted a few nights : although at the same time, a very profane farce was permitted to have a long run. When Louis XIV. expressed to the Prince of Condè, his wonder at the different fates of these two pieces, and asked the reason of it, the prince answered, " In the farce, RELIGION only is ridiculed ; but, Moliere in the *TARTUFFE*, has attacked even the PRIESTS."

BOILEAU has raised his subjects by many personifications ; particularly, in the beginning of the sixth canto, PIETY who had retired to the great Carthusian monastery on the Alps, is introduced as repairing

repairing to Paris, accompanied by FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY, in order to make her complaint to THEMIS: to which may be added, the monstrous figure of CHICANERY, attended by FAMINE, WANT, SORROW, and RUIN, in the beginning of the fifth canto. The chief divinity that acts throughout the poem, is DISCORD; which goddess is represented as coming from a convent of Cordeliers. A fine stroke of satire; but imitated from the satyrical Ariosto, who makes Michael find DISCORD in a cloister, instead of SILENCE, whom he there searched for in vain. NIGHT is also introduced as an actress with great propriety, in the third canto; where she repairs to the famous old tower at Montlery, in order to find out an owl which she may convey into the DESK, and which afterwards produces so ridiculous a consternation. SLOTH is another principal personage: she also is discovered in the dormitory of a monastery.

Les Plaisirs nonchalans folêtrent a l'entour.

L'un pâitrit dans un coin l'embonpoint des Chanoines;

*L'autre broye en riant le vermillon des Moines *.*

The speech she afterwards makes has a peculiar beauty, as it ends in the middle of a line; and by that means shews her inability to proceed.

THE

* Chant. ii.

THE third heroi-comic poem was the DISPENSARY of Garth: a palpable imitation of the LUTRIN, and the best satire on the physicians extant, except the SANGRADO of Le Sage, who have indeed been the object of almost every satirist. The behaviour and sentiments of SLOTH, the first imaginary being that occurs, are almost literally translated from Boileau: particularly the compliment that SLOTH pays to king William, whose actions disturb her repose:

Or if some cloyster's refuge I implore,
Where holy drones o'er dying tapers snore;
The peals of Nassau's arms these eyes uncloset,
Mine he molests, to give the world repose *.

Je croyois, loin des lieux d'on ce prince m'exile,
Que l'Eglise du moins m'assûroit un azile.
Mais envain j'espérois y regner sans effroi:
Moines, Abbes, Prieurs, tout s'arme contre moi †.

Garth, in ridiculing the clergy, speaks of that order with more acrimony than Boileau, who merely laughs at them. But Garth was one of the free-thinking WITS at Button's. He has introduced many excellent parodies on the classics: among which I cannot forbear quoting one, which is an imitation of some passages, which the reader will remember, in Virgil's

I

sixth

* Cant. i.

† Chant. ii.

sixth book, and where the circumstances are happily inverted.

* Since, said the ghost, with pity you'll attend,
Know, I'm Guaiacum, once your firmest friend;
And on this barren beach, in discontent
Am doom'd to stay, 'till th' angry pow'rs relent.
These spectres fear'd with scars that threaten here,
The victims of my late ill conduct are.
They vex with endless clamours my repose,
This wants his palate, that demands his nose;
And here they execute stern Pluto's will,
And ply me ev'ry moment with a pill †.

THIS author has been guilty of a strange impropriety, which cannot be excused, in making the fury DISEASE talk like a critic, give rules of writing, and a panegyrick on the best poets of the age †. The descent into the earth in the sixth canto, is a fine mixture of poetry and philosophy; the hint is taken from the || SYPHILIS of Fracastorius. Garth's versification

* Boileau says admirably of his physician, Chant. 4. Art. Poet.

Le rhume a son aspect se change en pleurisie;
Et par lui la migraine est bientôt phrenesie.

† Cant. vi.

† Cant. iv.

|| "Ed in vero nella Sifillide de l'autore se connocefe quanto una mente della filosofia rigenerata, ed incitata dal furor poetico prevaglia; e con quanto spirito muover possa, ed agitare le materie, che in se rivolge, e fuor di se in armoniosi versi distonde."

GRAVENA. p. 124. lib. 1.

tion is flowing and musical; his style perspicuous, and neat; and the poem in general abounds with sallies of wit, and nervous satire.

THE RAPE OF THE LOCK, now before us, is the fourth, and most excellent of the heroi-comic poems. The subject was a quarrel occasioned by a little piece of gallantry of Lord Petre, who, in a party of pleasure, found means to cut off a favourite lock of Mrs. Arabella Fermour's hair. POPE was desired to write it, in order to put an end to the quarrel it produced, by Mr. Caryl, who had been secretary to queen Mary, author of Sir Solomon Single a comedy, and of some translations in Dryden's Miscellanies. POPE was accustomed to say, "What I wrote fastest always pleased most." The first sketch of this exquisite piece, which Addison called *MERUM SAL*, was written in less than a fortnight, in two cantos only: but it was so universally applauded, that, in the next year, our poet enriched it with the machinery of the sylphs, and extended it to five cantos; when it was printed with a letter to Mrs. Fermour, far superior to any of Voiture. The insertion of the machinery of the sylphs in proper places, without the least appearance of its being awkwardly stitched in, is one of the happiest efforts of judgment and art. He took the idea of these invisible beings, so proper to be employed in a poem of this nature, from a little French book entitled, *Le Comte de Gabalis*, of which

I have lately met with an account, in an entertaining writer, "The Abbe Villars, who came from Thoulouse to Paris, to make his fortune by preaching, is the author of this diverting work. The five dialogues of which it consists, are the result of those gay conversations, in which the Abbe was engaged, with a small circle of men, of fine wit and humour, like himself. When this book first appeared, it was universally read, as innocent and amusing. But at length, its consequences were perceived, and reckoned dangerous, at a time when this sort of curiosities began to gain credit. Our devout preacher was denied the chair, and his book forbidden to be read. It was not clear whether the author intended to be ironical, or spoke all seriously. The second volume which he promised, would have decided the question: but the unfortunate Abbe was soon afterwards assassinated by ruffians, on the road to Lyons. The laughers gave out, that the gnomes and sylphs, disguised like ruffians, had shot him, as a punishment for revealing the secrets of the Cabala; a crime not to be pardoned by these jealous spirits, as Villars himself has declared in his book *."

It

* *Melanges d'Histoire et de Literature.* By Dom. Noel Dargonne, disguised under the name of Vigneul Marville. Tom. prem. pag. 275. edit. Rotterdam, 1700.

It may not be improper to give a specimen of this author's manner, who has lately been well imitated in the way of mixing jest with earnest, in an elegant piece called HERMIPPUS REDIVIVUS. The Comte de Gabalis being about to initiate his pupil into the most profound mysteries of the Rosicrucian philosophy, advises him to consider seriously, whether or no he had courage and resolution sufficient to RENOUNCE all those obstacles, which might prevent his arising to that height, which the figure of his nativity promised. "Le mot de RENONCER, says the scholar, m'affraya, et je ne doutay point qu'il n'allast me proposer de renoncer au baptême ou au paradis. Ainsi ne sçachant comme me tirer de ce mauvais pas; Renoncer, luy dis-je, Monsieur, quoi faut il renoncer a quelque chose? Vrayement, reprit il, il le faut bien; et il le faut necessairement, qu'il faut commencer par là. Je ne sçay si vous pourrez vous résoudre: mais je sçay bien que la sagesse l'habite point dans un corps sujet au peché, comme elle n'entre point dans une ame prevenüe d'erreur ou de malice. Les sages ne vous admettront jamais a leur compagnie, si vous ne renoncez dès à present à un chose qui ne peut compatir avec la sagesse. *Il faut*, ajouta-t-il tout bas en se baissant a mon orielle, *il faut renoncer à toute commerce charnel avec les femmes* *." On a diligent perusal of this

I 3

book,

* LE COMPTE DE GABALIS, ou ENTRETIENS sur les Sciences Secretes. Second ENTRETIEN, pag. 30. a Amsterdam, 1671.

book, I cannot find that POPE has borrowed any particular circumstances relating to these spirits, but merely the general idea of their existence.

THESE machines are vastly superior to the allegorical personages of Boileau and Garth; not only on account of their novelty, but for the exquisite poetry, and oblique satire, which they have given the poet an opportunity to display. The business and petty concerns of a fine lady, receive an air of importance from the notion of their being perpetually overlooked and conducted, by the interposition of celestial agents.

It is judicious to open the poem, by introducing the Guardian Sylph, warning Belinda against some secret impending danger. The account which Ariel * gives of the nature, office, and employment of these inhabitants of air, is finely fancied: into which several strokes of satire are thrown with great delicacy and address.

Think what an equipage thou hast in air,
And view with scorn two pages and a chair.

The transformation of women of different tempers into different kinds of spirits, cannot be too much applauded.

The

* Cant. i. ver. 27, to ver. 119.

- * The Sprites of fiery Termagants, in flame
 Mount up, and take a salamander's name:
 Soft yielding minds to water glide away,
 And sip with Nymphs, their elemental tea.
 The graver Prude sinks downward to a gnome,
 In search of mischief still on earth to roam.
 The light Coquettes in sylphs aloft repair,
 And sport and flutter in the fields of air.

The description of the † toilette, which succeeds, is judiciously given in such magnificent terms, as dignify the offices performed at it. Belinda dressing is painted in as pompous a manner, as Achilles arming. The canto ends with a circumstance, artfully con-

I 4

trived

- * These images have been lately expressed in Latin, with much purity and elegance; and deserve to be here inserted.

*Mortua lascivum resoluta liquescit in ignem,
 Aut abit in molles singula nympha notos:
 Ætheriosque trahens haustus, tenuissima turba,
 Versat ad æstivum lucida membra jubar.
 Gaudet adhuc circum molles operosa puellas
 Versari, et veneres suppeditare novas.
 Curat uti dulces commendant oscula risus,
 Purior ut sensim prodeat ore rubor:
 Ne quatiat comptos animosior aura capillos,
 Nec faedet pulchras pustula saeva genas:
 Neve recens maculâ violetur purpura palli,
 Excidat aut niveo pendula gemma sinu.
 Corpora nympharum vacuas tenentur in auras;
 At studia in memori pectore prisca manent.*

Carm. Quadrages. vol. ii. pag. 32. Oxon. 1748.

† Cant. i. ver. 121.

trived to keep this beautiful machinery in the reader's eye : for after the poet has said, that the fair heroine

Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face *;

He immediately subjoins,

The busy sylphs surround their darling care,
These set the head, and those divide the hair :
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown,
And Betty's prais'd for labours not her own.

THE mention of the Lock †, on which the poem turns, is rightly reserved to the second canto. The sacrifice of the baron to implore success to his undertaking, is another instance of our poet's judgment, in heightening the subject ‡. The succeeding scene of sailing upon the Thames is most gay and *riant*; and impresses the most pleasing pictures upon the imagination. Here too the machinery is again introduced with much propriety. Ariel summons his denizens of air; who are thus painted with a rich exuberance of fancy.

Some to the sun their insect wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold:

Transparent

* Ver. 741.

† Cant. ii. ver. 21.

‡ Ver. 57.

Transparent forms, too thin for mortal sight,
 Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd in light.
 Loose to the wind their airy garments flew;
 Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew,
 Dipt in the richest tincture of the skies,
 Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes;
 While every beam new transient colours flings,
 Colours, that change whene'er they wave their wings *.

Ariel afterwards enumerates the functions and employments of the sylphs, in the following manner: where some are supposed to delight in more gross, and others in more refined occupations.

Ye know the spheres and various tasks, assign'd
 By laws eternal to th' aerial kind.
 Some in the fields of purest æther play,
 And bask and brighten in the blaze of day;
 Some guide the course of wandering orbs on high,
 Or roll the planets through the boundless sky;
 Some, less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light,
 Pursue the stars, that shoot across the night;
 Or suck the mists in grosser air below;
 Or dip their pinions in the painted bow:
 Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,
 Or o'er the globe distil the kindly rain †.

Those who are fond of tracing images and sentiments to their source, may perhaps be inclined to think, that the hint of ascribing tasks and offices to such

I 5

imaginary

* Ver. 59.

† Cant. ii. ver. 75.

imaginary beings, is taken from the Fairies and the Ariel of Shakespeare: let the impartial critic determine, which has the superiority of fancy. The employment of Ariel in the *TEMPEST*, is said to be,

— — — To tread the ooze
Of the salt deep;
To run upon the sharp wind of the north;
To do—business in the veins of th' earth,
When it is bak'd with frost;
— — To dive into the fire; to ride
On the curl'd clouds.

And again,

— — In the deep nook, where once
Thou call'dst me up at midnight, to fetch dew
From the still-vest Bermoothes. — — —

Nor must I omit that exquisite song, in which his favourite and peculiar pastime is expressed.

Where the bee sucks, there suck I,
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly,
After sun-set, merrily;
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough,

With what wildness of imagination, but yet, with
what

what propriety are the amusements of the fairies pointed out in the MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM : amusements proper for none but fairies !

— — 'Fore the third part of a minute, hence :
Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds :
Some war with rear-mice for their leathern wings,
To make my small elves coats ; and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots, and wonders
At our quaint spirits. — — — — —

Shakespeare only could have thought of the following gratifications for Titania's lover ; and they are fit only to be offered, to her lover, by a fairy-queen.

Be kind and courteous to this gentleman,
Hop in his walks, and gambol in his eyes ;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.
The honey-bags steal from the humble bees,
And for night-tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes,
To have my love to bed, and to arise :
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies,
To fan the moon-beams from his sleeping eyes.

If it should be thought, that Shakespeare has the merit of being the first who assigned proper employments to imaginary persons, in the foregoing lines, yet

yet it must be granted, that by the addition of the most delicate satire to the most lively fancy, POPE, in the following passage, has excelled any thing in Shakespeare, or perhaps in any other author.

Our humbler province is to tend the fair,
Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care ;
To save the powder from too rough a gale,
Nor let th' imprison'd essences exhale ;
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flow'rs ;
To steal from rainbows, e'er they drop in show'rs,
A brighter wash ; to curl their waving hairs,
Assist their blushes and inspire their airs ;
Nay oft, in dreams invention we bestow,
To change a flounce, or add a furbelow *.

THE seeming importance given to every part of female dress, each of which is committed to the care and protection of a different sylph, with all the solemnity of a general appointing the several posts in his army, renders the following passage admirable, on account of its politeness, poignancy, and poetry.

Haste then, ye spirits, to your charge repair ;
The fluttering fan be Zephyretta's care ;
The drops to thee, Brillante, we consign :
And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine ;
Do thou, Crispissa, tend the fav'rite lock ;
Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock †.

The

* Cant. ii. ver. 91.

† Cant. ii. ver. 111.

The celebrated raillery of Addison on the hoop-petticoat, has nothing equal to the following circumstance; which marks the difficulty of guarding a part of dress of such high consequence.

To fifty chosen sylphs, of special note,
We trust th' important charge the PETTICOAT :
Oft have we known that sevenfold fence to fail,
Tho' stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs of mail;
Form a strong line about the silver bound,
And guard the wide circumference around *.

RIDET HOC, INQUAM, VENUS IPSA ; RIDENT
SIMPLICES NYMPHÆ, FERUS ET CUPIDO.

OUR poet still rises in the delicacy of his satire, where he employs, with the utmost judgment and elegance, all the implements and furniture of the toilette, as instruments of punishment to those spirits, who shall be careless of their charge: of punishment such as sylphs alone could undergo. Each of the delinquents,

Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins,
Be stop'd in vials, or transfix'd with pins;
Or plung'd in lakes of bitter washes lie;
Or wedg'd whole ages in a bodkin's eye;
Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain,
While clog'd he beats his silken wings in vain;

Or

Or alum-styptics with contracting pow'r,
 Shrink his thin essence like a rivell'd flow'r;
 Or, as Ixion fix'd, the wretch shall feel
 The giddy motion of the whirling mill;
 In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow,
 And tremble at the sea that froths below *.

If Virgil has merited such perpetual commendation for exalting his bees, by the majesty and magnificence of his diction, does not POPE deserve equal praises, for the pomp and lustre of his language, on so trivial a subject?

THE same mastery of language, appears in the lively and elegant description of the game at Ombre; which is certainly imitated from the Scacchia of Vida, and as certainly equal to it, if not superior. Both of them have elevated and enlivened their subjects, by such similes as the epic poets use; but as Chess is a play of a far higher order than Ombre, POPE had a more difficult task than Vida, to raise this his inferior subject into equal dignity and gracefulness. Here again our poet artfully introduces his machinery:

Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aerial guard
 Descend, and sit on each important card;
 First Ariel perch'd upon a mattadore †.

The

* Cant. ii. ver. 122. † Cant. iii. ver. 31.

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The majesty with which the kings of spades and clubs, and the knaves of diamonds and clubs are spoken of, is very amusing to the imagination : and the whole game is conducted with great art and judgment. I question whether Hoyle could have played it better than Belinda. It is finely contrived that she should be victorious ; as it occasions a change of fortune in the dreadful loss she was speedily to undergo, and gives occasion to the poet to introduce a moral reflection from Virgil which adds to the pleasantry of the story. In one of the passages where POPE has copied Vida, he has lost the propriety of the original, which arises from the different colours of the *men*, at chess.

Thus when dispers'd a routed army runs, &c. *

Non aliter, campis legio se buxea utrinque
Composuit, duplici digestis ordine turmis,
Adversisque ambæ fulsere coloribus alæ ;
Quam Gallorum acies, Alpino frigore lactea
Corpora, si tendant albis in prælia signis,
Auroræ populos contra, et Phaethonte perustos
Infano Æthiopas, et nigri Memnonis alas †.

To this scene succeeds the tea-table. It is, doubtless, as hard to make a coffee-pot shine in poetry as a plough : yet POPE has succeeded in giving elegance

* Cant. iii. ver. 81.

† Vidæ Scacchia Ludus, ver. 74, &c.

elegance to so familiar an object, as well as Virgil. The guardian spirits are again active, and importantly employed ;

Strait hover round the fair her airy band * ;
Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd.

Then follows an instance of assiduity fancied with great delicacy ;

Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd,
Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.

But nothing can excell the behaviour of the sylphs, and their wakeful solicitude for their charge, when the danger grows more imminent, and the catastrophe approaches.

Swift to the Lock a thousand sprites repair.

The methods by which they endeavoured to preserve her from the intended mischief are such, only as could be executed by a sylph ; and have therefore an admirable propriety, as well as the utmost elegance.

A thousand wings by turns blow back the hair † ;
And thrice they twicn'd the diamond in her ear,
Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the foe drew near.

Still

* Cant. iii. ver. 113.

† Cant. iii. ver. 116.

Still farther to heighten the piece, and to preserve the characters of his machines to the last, just when the fatal * forfex was spread.

Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd †,
A wretched sylph too fondly interpos'd ; ———
Fate urg'd the sheers, and cut the sylph in twain,
(But airy substance soon unites again.)

Which last line is an admirable parody on that passage of Milton, which perhaps oddly enough, describes Satan wounded :

The griding sword, with discontinuous wound,
Pass'd through him, but th' etherial substance clos'd,
Not long divisible ‡. — — — — —

The parodies are some of the most exquisite parts of this poem. That which follows from the "Dum juga montis aper," of Virgil, contains some of the most artful strokes of satire, and the most poignant ridicule imaginable.

While fish in streams, or birds delight in air,
Or in a coach and six the British fair,

As

* Observe the many periphrases, and uncommon appellations, POPE has used for *Scissars*, which would sound too vulgar, — "Fatal Engine, —" Forfex, — "Sheers, —" Meeting Points, &c."

† Cant. iii. ver. 153.

‡ Paradise Lost, book vi. ver. 330.

As long as Atalantis shall be read,
 Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,
 While visits shall be paid on solemn days,
 When numerous wax-lights in bright order blaze,
 While nymphs take treats, or assignations give,
 So long my honour, name and praise, shall live *.

THE introduction of frequent parodies on serious and solemn passages of Homer and Virgil, give much life and spirit to heroi-comic poetry. "Tu dors, Prelat? tu dors?" in Boileau, is the "*Eudæus Alpeō vīs*" of Homer, and is full of humour. The wife of the barber, talks in the language of Dido in her expostulations to her Æneas, at the beginning of the second canto of the *Lutrin*. POPE's parodies of the speech of Sarpédon in Homer †, and of the description of Achilles's sceptre ‡, together with the scales of Jupiter from Homer, Virgil, and Milton ||, are judiciously introduced in their several places; are perhaps superior to those Boileau or Garth have used, and are worked up with peculiar pleasantry. The mind of the reader is engaged by novelty, when it so unexpectedly finds a thought or object it had been accustomed to survey in another form, suddenly arrayed in a ridiculous garb. A mixture of comic and ridiculous images, with serious and important ones, is also no small beauty to this species of poetry. As in the following

* Cant. iii. ver. 165.

† Cant. iv. ver. 133.

† Cant. v. ver. 9.

|| Cant. v. ver. 72.

following passages, where real and imaginary distresses are coupled together.

Not youthful kings in battle seiz'd alive,
Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,
Not ardent lovers robb'd of all their bliss,
Not ancient ladies when refus'd a kiss,
Not tyrants fierce that unrepenting die,

Nay, to carry the climax still higher,

Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinn'd awry,
E'er felt such rage resentment and despair.

This is much superior to a similar passage in the Dispensary, which POPE might have in his eye;

At this the victors own such ecstasies †
As Memphian priests if their Osiris sneeze;
Or champions with Olympic clangor fir'd,
Or simpering prudes with spritely Nantz inspir'd,
Or Sultans rais'd from dungeons to a crown,
Or fasting zealots when the sermon's done,

These objects have no reference to Garth's subject, as almost all of POPE's have, in the passage in question, where some female foible is glanced at. In this same canto, the cave of SPLEEN, the pictures of her attendants, ILL-NATURE and AFFECTATION, the effects of the vapour that hung over her palace, the
imaginary

* Cant. iv. ver. 3.

† Cant. v. ad calc.

imaginary diseases the occasions, the * speech of Umbriel, a gnome, to this malignant deity, the vial of female sorrows, the speech of Thalestris to aggravate the misfortune, the breaking the vial with its direful effects, and the speech of the disconsolate Belinda; all these circumstances are poetically imagined, and are far superior to any of Boileau and Garth. How much in character is it for Belinda to mark a very dismal and solitary situation, by wishing to be conveyed,

Where the gilt chariot never marks the way,
Where none learn Ombre, none e'er taste Bohea †!

Nothing is more common in the poets than to introduce omens as preceding some important and dreadful

* Especially when he adjures the goddess by an account of his services, *Cant. iv. ver. 72.*

If e'er with airy horns I planted heads,
Or rumpled petticoats, or tumbled beds,
Or caus'd suspicion where no soul was rude,
Or discomposed the head-dress of a prude,
Or e'er to costly lapdog gave disease—
Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin,
That single act gives half the world the spleen.

Nothing can equal this beautiful panegyric, but the satirical touches that go before.

† *Cant. iv. ver. 156.*

ful event. Virgil has nobly described those that preceded the death of Dido. The rape of Belinda's LOCK must necessarily also be attended with alarming prodigies. With what exquisite satire are they enumerated!

Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box fell;
The tottering china shook without a wind *.

And still more to aggravate the direfulness of the impending evil,

Nay Poll fate mute, and Shock was most unkind!

THE chief subject of the fifth and last canto, is the battle that ensues, and the endeavours of the ladies to recover the hair. This battle is described, as it ought to be, in very lofty and pompous terms: a game of romps was never so well dignified before. The weapons made use of are the most proper imaginable: the lightening of the ladies eyes, intolerable frowns, a pinch of snuff, and a bodkin. The machinery is not forgot:

Triumphant Umbriel on a scone's height,
Clapp'd his glad wings, and fate to view the fight †.

Again, when the snuff is given to the baron,

The

* Cant. iv. ver. 161.

† Cant. v. ver. 53.

The gnomes direct, to ev'ry atom just,
The pungent grains of titillating dust *.

Boileau and Garth have also each of them enlivened their pieces with a mock-fight. But Boileau has laid the scene of his action in a bookseller's shop; where the combatants happen to encounter each other by chance. This conduct is a little inartificial; but has given the satyrist an opportunity of indulging his ruling passion, the exposing the bad poets, with which France at that time abounded. Swift's *Battle of the Books*, at the end of the *Tale of a Tub*, is evidently taken from this † battle of Boileau, which is excellent in its kind. The fight of the physicians, in the *Dispensary*, is one of its most shining parts. There is a vast deal of propriety, as well as pleasantry, in the weapons Garth has given to his warriors. They are armed, much in character, with caustics, emetics, and cathartics; with buck-thorn and steel-pills; with syringes, bed-pans and urinals. The execution is exactly proportioned to the deadliness of such irresistible weapons; and the wounds inflicted, are suitable to the nature of each different instrument, said to inflict them ‡.

We are now arrived at the grand catastrophe of the poem; the invaluable *Lock* which is so eagerly sought,

* Cant. v. ver. 85.

† Cant. v.

‡ Ibid.

sought, is irrecoverably lost! And here our poet has made a judicious use of that celebrated fiction of Ariosto; that all things lost on earth are treasured in the moon. How such a fiction can have place in an epic poem, it becomes the defenders of this extravagant and lawless rhapsodist to justify; but in a comic one, it appears with grace and consistency. The whole passage in Ariosto is full of wit and satire; for wit and satire were the chief and characteristical excellencies of Ariosto *. In this repository in the lunar sphere, says the SPRIGHTLY Italian were to be found,

La

* If this be thought too degrading a criticism on this justly celebrated Italian, I am ready to adopt the following opinion of a writer of taste and penetration:

"Ariosto pleases; but not by his monstrous and improbable fictions, by his bizarre mixture of the serious and comic styles, by the want of coherence in his stories, or by the continual interruptions in his narration. He charms by the force and clearness of his expression, by the readiness and variety of his inventions, and by his natural pictures of the passions, especially those of the GAY and AMOROUS kind. And however his faults may diminish our satisfaction, they are not able entirely to destroy it. Did our pleasure really arise from these parts of his poem, which we denominate faults, this would be no objection to criticism in general: it would only be an objection to those particular rules of criticism, which would establish such circumstances to be faults, and would represent them as universally blameable. If they are found to please, they cannot be faults; let the pleasure which they produce, be ever so unexpected and unaccountable." Hume's FOUR DISSERTATIONS. Diss. iv. p. 212. London, 1757.

Le lachrime, e i sospiri de gli amanti,
 L'inutil' tempo, che si perde a gioco,
 E l'otio lungo d'huomini ignoranti,
 Vani disegni, che non han mai loco,
 I vani desiderii sono tanti,
 Che la piu parte ingombra di quel loco,
 Cio che in summa qua giu perdesti mai,
 La su saltendoritrovar potrai *.

It is very remarkable, that the poet had the boldness to place among these imaginary treasures, the famous deed of gift of Constantine to Pope Silvester. "If," says he, I may be allowed to say this,"

Questo era il dono (se pero dir lece)
 Che Constantino al buon Silvestre fece.

It may be observed in general, to the honour of the poets, both ancient and modern, that they have ever been some of the first, who have detected and opposed the false claims, and mischievous usurpations, of superstition and slavery. Nor can this be wondered at, since these two are the greatest enemies, not only to all true happiness, but to all true genius.

THE denouement, as a pedantic disciple of Bossu would call it, of this poem, is well conducted. What is become of this important LOCK OF HAIR? It is made a constellation with that of Berenice, so celebrated by Callimachus. As it rises to heaven,

The

* Orlando Furioso. Cant. xxxiv.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 193

The sylphs behold it kindling as it flies *,
And pleas'd pursue its progress through the skies.

One cannot sufficiently applaud the art of the poet, in constantly keeping in the reader's view, the machinery of the poem, to the very last. Even when the Lock is transformed, the sylphs, who had so carefully guarded it, are here once again artfully mentioned, as finally rejoicing in its honourable transformation.

IN reading the *Lutrin*, I have always been struck with the impropriety of so serious a conclusion, as Boileau has given to so ludicrous a poem. PIETY and JUSTICE are beings rather too awful, to have any concern in the celebrated desk. They appear as much out of place and season, as would the archbishop of Paris in his pontifical robes, in an harlequin entertainment.

POPE does not desert his favourite Lock, even after it becomes a constellation; and the uses he assigns to it are indeed admirable, and have a reference to the subject of the poem.

This the beau monde shall from the mall survey *,
And hail with music its propitious ray;
This the blest lover shall for *Venus* take,
And send up prayers from Rosamunda's lake;

K

This

* Cant. v. ver. 130.

† Cant. v. ver. 133.

This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies,
 When next he looks through Galileo's eyes;
 And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom,
 The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

This is at once, *DULCE LOQUI*, and *RIDERE DECORUM*.

UPON the whole, I hope it will not be thought an exaggerated panegyric to say, that the *RAPE OF THE LOCK*, is the *BEST SATIRE* extant; that it contains the truest and liveliest picture of modern life; and that the subject is of a more elegant nature, as well as more artfully conducted, than that of any other heroic-comic poem. *POPE* here appears in the light of a man of gallantry, and of a thorough knowledge of the world; and indeed, he had nothing, in his carriage and deportment, of that affected singularity, which has induced some men of genius to despise, and depart from, the established rules of politeness and civil life. For all poets have not practiced the sober and rational advice of Boileau.

Que les vers ne soient pas votre eternal emploi:
 Cultivez vos amis, soyez homme de foi.
 C'est peu d'être agréable et charmant dans un livre;
 Il fait savoir encore, et converser, et vivre *.

OUR nation can boast also, of having produced one
 or

L' Art Poétique. Chant. iv.

or two more poems of the burlesque kind, that are excellent; particularly the *SPLENDID SHILLING*, that admirable copy of the solemn irony of Cervantes; who is the father and unrivalled model of the true mock-heroic: and the *MUSCIPULA*, written with the purity of Virgil, whom the author so perfectly understood, and with the pleasantry of Lucian: to which I cannot forbear adding, the *SCRIBLERIAD* of Mr. Cambridge *, the *MACHINÆ GESTICULANTES* of Addison, the *HOBBINOL* of Somerville, and the *TRIVIA* of Gay.

IF some of the most candid among the French critics begin to acknowledge, that they have produced nothing in point of *SUBLIMITY* and *MAJESTY*

K 2

equal

* This learned and ingenious writer hath made a new remark, in his preface, worth examination and attention. He says, that in first reading the *four* celebrated mock-heroic poems, he perceived they had all some radical defect. That at last he found by a diligent perusal of Don Quixote, that *Propriety* was the fundamental excellence of that Work. That all the *Marvellous* was reconcileable to *Probability*, as the author led his hero into *that* species of absurdity only, which it was *natural* for an imagination heated with the continual reading of books of chivalry to fall into. That the want of attention to this was the fundamental error of those poems. For with what *PROPRIETY* do *Churchmen*, *Physicians*, *Beaux*, and *Belles*, or *Booksellers*, in the *Lutrin*, *Dispensary*, *Rape of the Lock*, and *Dunciad*, address themselves to heathen Gods, offer sacrifices, consult oracles, or talk the language of Homer, and of the heroes of antiquity?

equal to the Paradise Lost, we may also venture to affirm, that in point of DELICACY, ELEGANCE, and fine-turned RAILLERY, on which they have so much valued themselves, they have produced nothing equal to the RAPE OF THE LOCK. It is in this composition, POPE principally appears a POET; in which he has displayed more imagination than in all his other works taken together. It should however be remembered, that he was not the FIRST former and creator of those beautiful machines, the sylphs; on which his claim to imagination is chiefly founded. He found them existing ready to his hand; but has, indeed, employed them with singular judgment and artifice.

S E C T.

S E C T. V.

Of The ELEGY to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady, The PROLOGUE to Cato, and The EPILOGUE to Jane Shore.

THE ELEGY to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady, which is next to be spoken of, as it came from the heart, is very tender and pathetic; more so, I think, than any other copy of verses of our author. We are unacquainted with the whole of her history, and with that series of misfortunes, which seems to have drawn on the melancholy catastrophe, alluded to in the beginning of this ELEGY. She is said to be the same person, to whom the Duke of Buckingham has addressed some lines, viz. "To a Lady designing to retire into a Monastery." This design is also hinted at in POPE's Letters *, where he says in a letter addressed, I presume, to this very person, "If you are resolved, in revenge, to rob the world of so much example, as you may afford it, I believe your design will be vain: for even, in a monastery, your devotions cannot carry you so far towards the next world, as to make this lose sight of you: but you will be like a star, that, while it is fix-

K 3

ed

* Vol. vii. p. 193. Octavo Edition.

ed in heaven, shines over all the earth. Wheresoever providence shall dispose of the most valuable thing I know, I shall ever follow you with my sincerest wishes; and my best thoughts will be perpetually waiting upon you, when you never hear of me or them. Your own guardian angels cannot be more constant, nor more silent."

THIS ELEGY opens with a striking abruptness, and a strong image; the poet fancies he beholds suddenly the phantom of his murdered friend;

What beck'ning ghost along the moonlight shade,
Invites my steps, and points to yonder glade?
'Tis she!——but why that bleeding bosom gor'd,
Why dimly gleams the visionary sword?

This question alarms the reader; and puts one in mind of that lively and affecting image in the prophecy of Isaiah, so vigorously conceived, that it places the object full in one's eyes. "Who is this that cometh from Edom? With dyed garments from Bosra *?" Akenfide has begun one of his odes in the like manner:

O fly! 'tis dire SUSPICION's mein;
And meditating plagues unseen,
The forc'refs hither bends!

Behold

* Chap. lxiii. ver. 1.

Behold her torch in gall imbru'd;
Behold, her garments drop with blood
Of lovers and of friends !

The execrations on the cruelties of this lady's relations, which had driven her to this deplorable extremity, are very spirited and forcible ; especially where the poet says emphatically,

Thus, if eternal justice rules the ball,
Thus shall your wives, and thus your children fall.

He describes afterwards the desolation of this family, by the following lively circumstance and prosopœia :

There passengers shall stand, and pointing say,
(While the long funerals blacken all the way)
Lo ! these were they, whose souls the furies steel'd,
And curst with hearts unknowing how to yield !
So perish all, whose breast ne'er learn'd to glow
For others good, or melt at others woe.

The incident of her dying in a country remote from her relations and acquaintance, is touched with great tenderness, and introduced with propriety, to aggravate and heighten her lamentable fate ;

No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear *,
Pleas'd thy pale ghost, or grac'd thy mournful bier ;

K 4

By

* Something like that pathetic stroke in the Philoctetes of Sophocles, who, among other heavy circumstances of distress, is said not to have near him, any *συνθρονον οριμα*. Ver. 171,
—Not to be translated !

By foreign hands thy dying eyes were clos'd,
 By foreign hands thy decent limbs compos'd,
 By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
 By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd!

The force of the repetition of the significant epithet *foreign*, need not be pointed out to any reader of sensibility. The right of sepulture of which she was deprived, from the manner of her death, is glanced at with great delicacy; nay, and a very poetical use is made of it.

What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
 Nor hallow'd dirge be mutter'd o'er thy tomb?
 Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be drest,
 And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast,
 There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
 There the first roses of the year shall blow.

IF this ELEGY be so excellent, it may be ascribed to this cause; that the occasion of it was real; for it is certainly an indisputable maxim, "That nature is more powerful than fancy; that we can always feel more than we can imagine; and that the most artful fiction must give way to truth." When Polus the celebrated actor, once affected his audience with more than ordinary emotions, it was "*luctû et lamentis veris*," by bursting out into real cries and tears; for in personating Electra weeping over the supposed urn of her brother Orestes, he held in his hand

hand the real ashes of his own son lately dead *. Events that have actually happened are, after all, the properest subjects for poetry. The best eclogue of Virgil †, the best ode of Horace ‡, are founded on real incidents. If we briefly cast our eyes over the most interesting and affecting stories, ancient or modern, we shall find that they are such, as however adorned and a little diversified, are yet grounded on true history, and on real matters of fact. Such, for instance, among the ancients, are the stories, of Joseph, of Oedipus, the Trojan war and its consequences, of Virginia and the Horatii; such, among the moderns, are the stories of king Lear, the Cid, Romeo and Juliet, and Oronooko. The series of events contained in these stories, seem far to surpass the utmost powers of human imagination. In the best conducted fiction, some mark of improbability and incoherence will still appear.

I SHALL only add to these, a tale literally true, which the admirable DANTE has introduced in his Inferno, and which is not sufficiently known; I cannot recollect any passage, in any writer whatever, so truly pathetic. Ugolino, a Florentine Count, is giving the description of his being imprisoned with

K 5

his

* Aul. Gell. Noct. Attic. Lib. vii. Cap. v.

† The First.

‡ Ode xiii. lib. ii.

his children by the archbishop Ruggieri. "The hour approached when we expected to have something brought us to eat. But instead of seeing any food appear, * *I heard the doors of that horrible dungeon more closely barred.* I beheld my little children *in silence*, and could not weep. My heart was petrified! The little wretches wept, and my dear Anselm said; *Tu guardi sì, padre: che hai? father you look on us! what ails you?* I could neither weep nor answer, and continued swallowed up in silent agony, all that day, and the following night, even till the dawn of day. As soon as a glimmering ray darted through the doleful prison, that I could view again *those four faces, in which my own image was impressed, I gnawed both my hands,* with grief and rage. My children believing I did this through eagerness to eat, raising themselves suddenly up, said to me, *My father! our torments would be less, if you would allay the rage of your hunger upon us.* I restrained myself, that I might not encrease their misery. *We were all mute that day, and the following.* Quel di, e l' altro, stemmo-tutti muti. The fourth day being come, Gaddo falling extended at my feet, cried; *Padre mio, che non m'ajuti! My father, why do you not help me?* and died. The other three expired one after the other between the fifth and

* It was thought not improper to distinguish the more moving passages by Italics. Mr. Baretti's just translation is here used. See his DISSERTATION on the Italian Poets.

and sixth day, famished as thou seeest me now ! And I, being seized with blindness, began to go groping upon them with my hands and feet : and continued calling them by their names three days after they were dead. *E tre dì li chiamai poichè fur morti : then hunger vanquished my grief !*"

If this inimitable description had been found in Homer, the Greek tragedies, or Virgil, how many commentaries and panegyrics would it have given rise to ? What shall we say, or think, of the genius able to produce it ? There are many of the same nature ; and perhaps the Inferno of Dante is the next composition to the Iliad, in point of originality and sublimity. And with regard to the Pathetic, let this tale stand a testimony of his abilities : for my own part, I truly believe it was never carried to a greater height. It is remarkable, that Chaucer appears to have been particularly struck with this tale in Dante, having highly commended this, " grete poete of Italie," for this narration ; with a summary of which he concludes the Monke's Tale *.

THE

* Milton was particularly fond of this writer. The following passage is curious, and has not been taken notice of by the late writers of his life : " Ego certè istis utrisque linguis non extremis tantummodò labris madidus ; sed siquis alius, quantum per annos licuit, poculis majoribus prolutus, possum tamen nonnunquam

THE PROLOGUE to *Addison's Tragedy of Cato*, is superior to any prologue of Dryden; who, notwithstanding, is so justly celebrated for this species of writing. The prologues of Dryden are satyrical and facetious; this of POPE is solemn and sublime, as the subject required. Those of Dryden contain general topics of criticism and wit, and may precede any play whatsoever, even tragedy or comedy. This of POPE is particular, and appropriated to the tragedy alone, which it was designed to introduce. The most striking images and allusions it contains, are taken, with judgment, from some passages in the life of Cato himself. Such is that fine stroke, more lofty than any thing in the tragedy itself, where the poet says, that when Cæsar amid the pomp and magnificence of a triumph,

Shew'd Rome her Cato's figure drawn in state;
 As her dead father's reverend image past,
 The pomp was darken'd and the day o'ercast;
 The triumph ceas'd—Tears gush'd from ev'ry eye,
 The world's great victor pass'd unheeded by;
 Her last good man dejected Rome ador'd,
 And honour'd Cæsar's less than Cato's sword.

Such,

nonnunquam ad illum DANTEM, & Petrarcham, aliosque vestros complusculos, libenter & cupidè comessatum ire. Nec me tam ipsæ Athenæ Atticæ cum illo suo pellucido Ilisso, nec illa vetus Roma suâ Tiberis ripâ retinere valuerunt, quin sæpe Arnum vestrum, & Fæsulanos illos Colles invisere amem."

Milton. EPISTOL. Epist. viii. B. Bommathæo Florentino.

Such, again, is the happy allusion to an old story mentioned in Martial, of this sage going into the theatre, and immediately coming out of it again :

Such plays alone should win a British ear,
As Cato's self had not disdain'd to hear.

From which he draws an artful panegyric, on the purity and excellence of the play he was celebrating.

WITH respect to sprightly turns and poignancy of wit, the prologues of Dryden have not been equalled. Many, and indeed the most excellent of them, were written on occasion of the players going to Oxford ; a custom, for the neglect of which, no good reason can be assigned ; except, perhaps, that even the players must now forsooth follow the contemptible cant of decrying that most learned university, and of doing nothing that may contribute to its pleasure and emolument. At this time Dryden was so famous for his prologues, that no piece was relished, nor would the theatres *scarcely* venture to produce it, if it wanted this fashionable ornament. To this purpose, an anecdote is recorded of Southerne ; who, on bringing his first play on the stage, did not fail to bespeak a prologue of the artist in vogue. The usual price had ever been four guineas. In the present case, Dryden insisted that he must have six for his work ;
“ which,

“ which, said the mercantile bard, is out of no disrespect to you, young man ; but the players have had my goods too cheap.”

THE tragedy of Cato itself, is a glaring instance of the force of party * ; so heavy and declamatory a drama would never have met with such rapid and amazing success, if every line and sentiment had not been particularly tortured, and applied, to recent events, and the reigning disputes of the times. The purity and energy of the diction, and the loftiness of the sentiments, copied in a great measure from Lucan, Tacitus, and Seneca the philosopher, merit approbation. But I have always thought, that those pompous Roman sentiments are not so difficult to be produced, as is vulgarly imagined : and which, indeed,

* When Addison spake of the secretary of state at that time, he always called him, in the language of Shakespeare, “ *That canker’d Bolingbroke.*” Notwithstanding this, Addison assured POPE he did not bring his tragedy on the stage with any party views ; nay, desired POPE to carry the poem to the Lords Oxford and Bolingbroke, for their perusal. The play, however, was always considered as a warning to the people, that liberty was in danger during that tory ministry. To obviate the strong impressions, that so popular a performance might make on the minds of the audience, Lord Bolingbroke, in the midst of their violent applauses, sent for Booth, who played Cato, one night, into his box, between the acts, and presented him with fifty guineas ; in acknowledgement, as he expressed it with great address, for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator.

deed, dazzle only the vulgar. A stroke of nature is, in my opinion, worth a hundred such thoughts, as,

When vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,
The post of honour is a private station.

CATO is a fine dialogue on liberty, and the love of one's country; but considered as a dramatic performance, nay as a model of a just tragedy, as some have affectedly represented it, it must be owned to want, ACTION and PATHOS; the two hinges, I presume, on which a just tragedy ought necessarily to turn, and without which it cannot subsist. It wants also CHARACTER, although that be not so essentially necessary to a tragedy as ACTION. Syphax, indeed, in his * interview with Juba, bears some marks of a rough African: the speeches of the rest may be transferred to any of the personages concerned. The simile drawn from mount Atlas, and the description of the Numidian traveller smothered in the desert, are indeed in character, but sufficiently obvious. How Addison could fall into the false and unnatural custom of ending his three first acts with similes, is amazing in so chaste and correct a writer. The loves of Juba and Marcia, of Portius and Lucia, are vicious and insipid episodes, debase the dignity, and destroy the unity, of the fable.

ONE

* Act. ii. Scene v.

ONE would imagine, from the practice of our modern play-wrights, that love was the only passion, capable of producing any great calamities in human life : for this passion has engrossed, and been imper- tinently introduced into, all subjects *. In the Cinna of Corneille, which the prince of Condé called “ the Breviary of kings,” Maximus whines like a shepherd in the Pastor Fido, even in the midst of profound political reflections, that excel those of Tacitus and Machiavel ; and while the most important event, that could happen to the empire of the world, was debating. In his imitation of the Orestes of Sophocles, Crebillon has introduced a frigid love-intrigue. Achilles must be in love in the Iphigenia of Racine ; and the rough Mithridates must be involved in this universal passion.

A passion

* When the resolution of Medea to kill her children, is almost disarmed and destroyed by looking at them, and by their smiling upon her, she breaks out ;

Φευ, φευ· τι προσδερκεσθε μ'ομμασιν, τεκνα ;
Τι προσγελαίε τον πανυαλον γελων ;
Αι, αι—τι δρασω ; —καρδια γαρ οιχέλαι.

Heu, heu ! cur me oculis aspicitis, liberi ?

Cur arridetis hoc extremo risu ?

Heu, heu ! quid faciam ? cor enim mihi disperit !

Euripid. Medea. Ver. 1041.

No sentiments of the Lover can be so tender, and so deeply touching, as these of the Mother.

A passion however it is, that will always shine upon the stage, where it is introduced as the chief subject, but not subordinate and secondary *. Thus, perhaps, there cannot be finer subjects for a drama, than Phædra, Romeo, Othello, and Monimia. The whole distress in these pieces arises *singly* from this unfortunate passion, carried to an extreme †. The GREATER passions were the constant subjects of the Grecian; the TENDERER passions of the French and English theatres. Terror reigned in the former; pity occupies the latter. The moderns may yet boast of some pieces, that are not emasculated with this epidemical effeminacy. Racine was at last convinced of its impropriety, and gave the public his Athaliah; in which were no parts, commonly called by the French d'amoureux et de l'amoureuse, which parts were always given to their two capital actors.

The

* L'Amour furieux, criminel, malheureux, suivi de remords, arrache de nobles larmes. Point de milieu: il faut, ou que l'amour domine en tiran, ou qu'il ne paroisse pas.

Oeuvres de Voltaire. Tom. xii. pag. 153.

I have just been told, that CHATEAUBRUN also very lately made poor Philoctetes in love, in his Desart Island.

† The introduction of female actresses on the modern stage, together with that importance which the ladies in these latter ages have justly gained, in comparison to what the ancients allowed them, are the two great reasons, among others, of the prevalence of these tender tales. The ladies of Athens, had not interest enough to damn a piece of Sophocles or Euripides.

The Merope and Orestes of Voltaire, are likewise free from any ill-placed tenderness, and romantic gallantry. For which he has merited the praises of the learned father Tournemine, in a letter to his friend father Brumoy *. But LEAR and MACBETH are also striking instances what interesting tragedies may be written, without having recourse to a love-story. It is pity that the tragedy of Cato, in which all the rules of the drama, as far as the mechanism of writing reaches, are observed, is not exact with respect to the unity of Time. There was no occasion to extend the time of the fable longer than the mere representation takes up; all might have passed in the compass of three hours from the morning, with a description of which the play opens; if the poet, in the fourth scene of the fifth act, had not talked of the *setting* sun playing on the armour of the soldiers.

HAVING been imperceptibly led into this little criticism on the tragedy of Cato, I beg leave to speak a few words on some other of Addison's pieces. The † first of his poems addressed to Dryden, Sir John Somers, and king William are languid, prosaic, and void

* Les Oeuvres de Voltaire, tom. viii. 38.

† Tickell has ridiculously marked the author's age to be but twenty-two and twenty-seven; as if these verses were extraordinary efforts at that age! To these however Addison owed his introduction at court, and his acquaintance with that polite patron Lord Somers.

void of any poetical imagery or spirit. The Letter from Italy, is by no means equal to a subject fruitful of genuine poetry, and which might have warmed the most cold and correct imagination. One would have expected, a young traveller in the height of his genius and judgment, would have broke out into some strokes of enthusiasm. With what flatness and unfeelingness has he spoken of statuary and painting! Raphaël never received a more phlegmatic eulogy. The slavery and superstition of the present Romans, are well touched upon towards the conclusion; but I will venture to name a little piece on a parallel subject, that greatly excells this celebrated Letter; and in which are as much lively and original imagery, strong painting, and manly sentiments of freedom, as I have ever read in our language. It is a copy of verses written at Virgil's Tomb, and printed in Doddsley's * Miscellanies.

THAT there are many well-wrought descriptions, and even pathetic strokes, in the Campaign, it would be stupidity and malignity to deny. But surely the regular march which the poet has observed from one town to another, as if he had been a commissary of the army, cannot well be excused. There is a passage in Boileau, so remarkably opposite to this fault of Addison, that one would almost be tempted to think

think he had the Campaign in his eye, when he wrote it, if the time would admit * it.

Loin ces rimeurs craintifs, dont l'esprit phlegmatique
Garde dans ses fureurs un ordre didactique ;
Qui chantant d'un heros les progrès éclatans,
MAIGRES HISTORIENS, SUIVRONT L' ORDRE DES
TEMPS ;

Ils n'osent un moment prendre un sujet de vûe,
Pour prendre Dole, il faut que Lille soit rendüe ;
Et que leur vers exact, ainsi que Mezerai,
Ait fait déjà tomber—les remparts de † Coutrai.

The most spirited verses Addison has written, are, an Imitation of the third ode of the third book of Horace, which is indeed performed with energy and vigour ; and his compliment to Kneller, on the picture of king George the first. The occasion of this last poem is peculiarly happy ; for among the works of Phidias which he enumerates, he selects such statues as exactly mark, and characterise, the last six British kings and queens.

† Great Pan who went to chase the fair,
And lov'd the spreading oak, was there ;

Old

* But the Art of Poetry was written in the year 1672, many years before the Campaign. Addison might have profited by this rule of his acquaintance, for whom he had a great respect.

† L'Art poetique. Ch. ii.

† CHARLES II. famous for his lewdness ; the allusion to his being concealed in the oak is artful. JAMES II. WILLIAM III.

Queen

Old Saturn too, with upcast eyes,
 Beheld his A B D I C A T E D skies;
 And mighty Mars for war renown'd,
 In adamantinè armor frown'd:
 By him the childless goddess rose,
 Minerva, studious to compose
 Her twisted threads: the web she strung,
 And o'er a loom of marble hung;
 Thetis the troubled ocean's queen,
 Match'd with a M O R T A L, next was seen,
 Reclining on a funeral urn,
 Her short-liv'd darling son to mourn.
 The last was H E, whose thunder slew
 The Titan race, a rebel crew,
 That from a H U N D R E D H I L L S ally'd,
 In impious league their king defy'd.

There is scarcely, I believe, any instance, where mythology has been applied with so much delicacy and dexterity, and has been contrived to answer in its application, so minutely, exactly, and in so many corresponding circumstances.—

W H A T E V E R censures we have here, too boldly, perhaps, ventured to deliver on the *professed* poetry of Addison, yet must we candidly own, that in various parts of his prose-essays, are to be found many strokes

Queen M A R Y, who had no heirs, and was a great work-woman. Queen A N N E married to the P R I N C E of Denmark, who lost the D. of Gloucester in his youth. George I. who conquered the Highland rebels at Preston, 1715.

strokes of genuine and sublime poetry; many marks of a vigorous and exuberant imagination. Particularly, in the noble allegory of Pain and Pleasure, the Vision of Mirza, the story of Maraton and Yaratilda, of Constantia and Theodosius, and the beautiful eastern tale of Abdallah and Balsora; and many others: together with several strokes in the Essay on the pleasures of imagination. It has been the lot of many great names, not to have been able to express themselves with beauty and propriety in the fetters of verse, in their respective languages; who have yet manifested the force, fertility, and creative power of a most poetic genius, in prose *. This was the case of Plato, of Lucian, of Fenelon, of Sir Philip Sidney, and of Dr. T. Burnet, who in his Theory of the Earth, has displayed an imagination, very nearly equal to that of Milton.

Mœnia mundi
Discedunt! totum video per Inane geri res!

After all, the chief and characteristical excellency of Addison, was his HUMOUR; for in humour no mortal

* In some of the eastern stories, lately published in the ADVENTURER, a vast and noble invention is displayed; and this too by an author, that, I have never heard, has written any considerable verses. See, particularly the story of Amurath, N^o. 20, of Nouraddin and Amana, N^o. 73, and of Carazan, N^o. 132, by Mr. Hawkefworth.

mortal has excelled him except Moliere. Witness the character of Sir Roger de Coverly, so original, so natural, and so inviolably preserved; * particularly, in the month, which the Spectator spends at his hall in the country. Witness also the Drummer, that excellent and neglected comedy, that just picture of life and real manners, where the poet never speaks in his own person, or totally drops or forgets a character, for the sake of introducing a brilliant simile, or acute remark: where no train is laid for wit; no JEREMYS, or BENS, are suffer'd to appear.

THE EPILOGUE to *Jane Shore*, is the last piece that belongs to this Section; the title of which by this time the reader may have possibly forgot. It is written with the air of gallantry and raillery, which, by a strange perversion of taste, the audience expects in all epilogues to the most serious and pathetic pieces. To recommend cuckoldom and palliate adultery is their usual intent. I wonder Mrs. Oldfield was not suffered to speak it; for it is superior to that which was used on the occasion. In this taste Garrick has
written

* Vol. II. during the month of July. See the characters of Will. Wimble, Moll. White, and the justices of the quorum, p. 200. & seq. And Vol. 5. Sir Roger at Westminster Abby, 329. and particularly at the tragedy of the Distress'd Mother with the Spectator.

written some, that abound in spirit and drollery. Rowe's genius * was rather delicate and soft, than strong and pathetic; his compositions sooth us with a tranquil and tender sort of complacency, rather than cleave the heart with pangs of commiseration. His distresses are entirely founded on the passion of love. His diction is extremely elegant and chaste, and his versification highly melodious. His plays are declamations rather than dialogues, and his characters are general, and undistinguished from each other. Such a furious character as that of Bajazet, is easily drawn; and, let me add, easily acted. There is a want of unity in the fable of Tamerlane. The death's head, dead body, and stage hung in mourning, in the Fair Penitent, are artificial and mechanical methods of affecting an audience. In a word, his plays are musical and pleasing poems, but inactive and un-moving tragedies. This of Jane Shore is, I think, the most interesting and affecting of any he has given us: but probability is sadly violated in it by the neglect of the unity of time. For a person to be supposed to be starved during the representation of five acts, is a striking

* There are however some images in Rowe strongly painted, such, particularly, as the following, which is worthy of Spenser; speaking of the *Tower*.

Methinks SUSPICION and DISTRUST dwell here,
Staring with meagre forms thro' grated windows.

Lady Jane Grey, Act iii. Sc. ii.

striking instance of the absurdity of this violation. In this piece, as in all of Rowe, are many florid speeches utterly inconsistent with the state and situation of the distressful personages who speak them. When Shore first meets with her husband, she says,

* Art thou not risen by miracle from death ?
Thy shroud is fall'n from off thee, and the grave
Was bid to give thee up, that thou might'st come,
The messenger of grace and goodness to me.—

He has then added some lines, intolerably flowery and unnatural ;

Give me your drops, ye soft descending rains,
Give me your streams, ye never-ceasing springs,
That my sad eyes may still supply my duty,
And feed an everlasting flood of sorrow.

This is of a far distant strain from those tender and simple exclamations, she uses, when her husband offers her some rich preserves ;

—————† How can you be so good ?

And again ;

—————Have you forgot
The costly string of pearl you brought me home,
And ty'd about my neck ! *how could I leave you ?*

L

She

* Act v. Sec. iv.

† Ibid.

She continues to gaze on him with earnestness, and instead of eating as he intreats her, she observes,

—————You're strangely alter'd—
 Say, gentle Belmour, is he not ? how pale
 Your visage is become ? Your eyes are hollow,—
 Nay, you are wrinkled too—

To which she instantly subjoins, struck with the idea that she herself was the unhappy cause of this alteration ;

—————Alas the day !
 My wretchedness has cost you many a tear,
 And many a bitter pang since last we parted.

What she answers to her husband, when he asks her movingly,

Why dost thou fix thy dying eyes upon me
 With such an earnest, such a piteous look,
 As if thy heart was full of some sad meaning,
 Thou couldst not speak !—

Is pathetic to a great degree ;

Forgive me ! *but* forgive me !

These few words far exceed the most pompous declamations of *Cato*. The interview betwixt Jane Shore and Alicia, in the middle of this act, is also very affecting :

affecting: where the madness of Alicia is well painted. But of all representations of madness, that of Clementina, in the History of Sir Charles Grandison, is the most deeply interesting. I know not whether even the madness of Lear is wrought up, and expressed by so many little strokes of nature, and genuine passion. Shall I say it is pedantry to prefer and compare, the madness of Orestes in Euripides, to this of Clementina?

It is probable, that this is become the most popular and pleasing tragedy of all Rowe's works, because it is founded on our own history. I cannot forbear wishing, that our writers would more frequently search for subjects, in the annals of England, which afford many striking and pathetic events, proper for the stage. We have been too long attached to Grecian and Roman stories. In truth, the DOMESTICA FACTA, are more interesting, as well as more useful: more interesting, because we all think ourselves concerned in the actions and fates of our countrymen; more useful, because the characters and manners bid the fairest to be true and natural, when they are drawn from models with which we are exactly acquainted. The Turks, the Persians, and Americans, of our poets, are in reality distinguished from Englishmen, only by their turbans and feathers; and think, and act, as if they were born and educated within the bills of mortality. The historical plays of

* Shakespeare, are always particularly grateful to the spectator, who loves to see and hear our own Harrys and Edwards, better than all the Achillesees or Cæsars, that ever existed. In the choice of a domestic story, however, much judgment and circumspection must be exerted, to select one of a proper æra; neither of too ancient, or of too modern a date. The manners of times very ancient, we shall be apt to falsify, as those of the Greeks and Romans. And recent events, with which we are thoroughly acquainted, are deprived of the power of impressing solemnity and awe, by their notoriety and familiarity. Age softens and wears away all those disgracing and depreciating circumstances, which attend modern transactions, merely because they are modern. Lucan was much embarrassed by the proximity of the times he treated of. On this very account, as well as others, the best tragedy that could be possibly written on the murder of Charles I. would be coldly received. Racine ventured to write on a recent history, in his *Bajazet*; but would not have attempted it, had he not thought, that the distance of his hero's country repaired, in some measure, the nearness of the time in which he lived. "Major a longinquo reverentia."

POPE,

* Milton has left, in a manuscript, thirty-three subjects for tragedies, all taken from the English annals; which manuscript the curious reader may see printed in Newton's Edit. of Milton, Oct. Vol. iii. pag. 331. And in Birch's *Life of Milton*, prefixed to his edition of Milton's prose-works, pag. 51; and in Peck's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Milton*, pag. 90.

POPE, it is said, had framed a design of writing an epic poem, on a fact recorded in our old annalists, and therefore more engaging to an Englishman; on the ARRIVAL of BRUTUS, the supposed grandson of Æneas, in our island, and the settlement of the first foundations of the British monarchy. A full scope might have been given to a vigorous imagination, to embellish a fiction drawn from the bosom of the remotest antiquity. Some tale, equally venerable and ancient, it was also the purpose of Milton * to adorn;

L 3

* Whether he intended, as A POET expresses it, To,

Record old ARTHUR's magic tale,
And EDWARD, fierce in fable mail;
Sing royal BRUTUS' lawless doom,
And brave BONDUCA, scourge of Rome;
Great PENDRAGON's fair-branched line,
Stern ARVIRAGE, or old LOCKRINE.

THE UNION, pag. 92.

"An historical poem, says Milton, in the above-mentioned manuscript, may be founded somewhere in Alfred's reign, especially at his issuing out of Edelingsey, on the Danes, whose actions are well like those of Ulysses." In Milton's history of England, may be seen the story of Brutus here in question: with which he seems pleased, as it suited the romantic turn of his mind. See his MANSUS,

Siquando indigenas revocabo in carmina reges,
Arthurumque etiam, &c.
Ipse ego Dardanias Rutupina per æquora puppes,
Dicam, & Pandrafidos regnum vetus Inogeniæ,
Brennumque, Arviragumque, &c.

And, particularly, the EPITAPHIUM DAMONIS.

for he says, in his Reason of church government *,
 " I am meditating what king or knight BEFORE THE
 CONQUEST might be chosen, in whom to lay the
 pattern of a christian hero." But shall I be pardon-
 ed for suspecting, that POPE would not have succeed-
 ed in this design; that so DIDACTIC a genius would
 have been deficient in that SUBLIME and PATHET-
 IC, which are the main nerves of the epopea;
 that he would have given us many elegant descripti-
 ons, and many GENERAL characters, well drawn;
 but would have failed to set before our eyes the RE-
 ALITY of these objects, and the ACTIONS of these
 characters: for Homer professedly draws no charac-
 ters, but gives us to collect them from the looks and
 behaviour of each person he introduces; that POPE's
 close and constant reasoning had impaired and crush-
 ed the faculty of imagination; that the political re-
 flections, in this piece, would, in all probability, have
 been more numerous, than the affecting strokes of na-
 ture; that it would have more resembled the HEN-
 RIADÉ, than the ILIAD, or even the GIERUSA-
 LEMME LIBERATA; that it would have appeared, (if
 this scheme had been executed) how much, and for
 what reasons, the man that is skilful in painting mo-
 dern life, and the most secret foibles and follies of his
 cotemporaries, is, THEREFORE disqualified for re-
 presenting the ages of heroisin, and that simple life,
 which

* Pag. 24.

which alone epic poetry can gracefully describe ; in a word, that this composition would have shewn more of the PHILOSOPHER than of the POET. Add to all this, that it was to have been written in rhyme ; a circumstance, sufficient of itself alone to overwhelm and extinguish all enthusiasm, and produce endless tautologies and circumlocutions. Are not these suppositions strengthened by what Dr. Warburton * has informed us, namely, that POPE in this poem intended to have treated amply, “ Of ALL that regarded civil regimen, or the science of politics ; that the several forms of a republic were here to have been examined and explained ; together with the several modes of religious worship, as far forth as they affect society ;” than which, surely there could not have been a more improper subject for an epic poem.

It is not impertinent to observe, for the sake of those who are fond of the history of literature, and of the human mind in the progress of it, that the very first poem that appeared in France, any thing like an epic poem, was on this identical subject, of Brutus arriving in England. It was written by Master EUSTACHE, so early as in the reign of Louis the seventh, surnamed the Young, who ascended the throne in the year 1137, and who was the husband of the celebrated Eleonora, afterwards divorced, and married to our Henry the second. The author called it, Le

L 4

ROMAN

* Vol. III.

ROMAN de Brut. Every piece of poetry was at that time denominated a romance. The Latin Language ceased to be regularly spoken in France, about the ninth century; and was succeeded by what was called the *Romance-tongue*, a mixture of the language of the Franks, and of bad Latin. The species of writing, called *Romans*, began in the tenth century, according to the opinion of the Benedictine fathers *, who have well refuted M. Fleuri and Calmet, who make it less ancient by two hundred years. The poem, or *Roman*, we are speaking of, is full of wonderful and improbable tales, and supernatural adventures, suited to the taste of so barbarous an age. It is matter of some curiosity, to see a specimen of the style of this eldest of the French poets. This is his exordium :

Qui veut ouir, qui veut scavoir,
De roi en roi, & d' hoir en hoir,
Qui cils furent, & d' où cils vinrent,
Qui Angleterre primes tinrent.

We may judge, from this passage, of the state of the language. Master Eustache has been particularly careful to mark the time in which he lived and wrote, by his two concluding lines :

L' an mil cent cinquante—cinq ans
Fit Maître Eustache ces Romans.

I will

* Hist. Lit. T. 6, 7.

I will take leave to add, that the second poem, now remaining, in the French language, was entitled, *The Romance of Alexander the Great*. It was the confederated work of four authors, famous in their time. Lambert le Court, and Alexander of Paris, sung the exploits of Alexander; Peter de Saint Clost, wrote his will in verse; the writing the will of a hero being then a common topic; and John le Nivelois, added a book concerning the manner in which his death was revenged. It is remarkable, that before this time, all the *Romans* had been composed in verses of eight syllables: but in this piece, the four authors first used verses of TWELVE syllables, as more solemn and majestic. And this was the origin, though but little known, of those verses, which we now call ALEXANDRINES; the French heroic measure: the name being derived from Alexander, the hero of the piece, or from Alexander, the most celebrated of the four poets concerned in this work. These were the most applauded poets of that age. Fauchet highly commends this poem: particularly a passage where a Cavalier is struck to the ground with a lance, who, says the old bard,

Du long comme il etoit, mesura la campagne.

Which is not inferior to Virgil's,

Hesperiam metire jacens.—

One would not imagine this line had been written, so early as the middle of the twelfth century. A great and truly learned antiquary has remarked, for the honour of our country, that about this time, 1160, appeared the first traces of any theatre. "A monk called Geoffry, who was afterwards abbot of St. Albans in England, employed in the education of youth, made his pupils represent, with proper scenes and dresses, tragedies of piety. The subject of the first dramatic piece, was, the miracles of saint Catharine, which appeared long before any of our representations of the MYSTERIES *."

* The president Henault, *Histoire de France*. Tom. I. p. 151. a Paris 1749.

S E C T. VI.

*Of the Epistle of SAPPHO to PHAON, and
of ELOISA to ABELARD.*

IT is no small merit in Ovid, to have invented * this beautiful species of writing epistles under feigned characters. It is a high improvement on the Greek elegy ; to which its dramatic nature renders it greatly superior. It is indeed no other than a passionate soliloquy ; in which, the mind gives vent to the distresses and emotions under which it labours : but by being directed and addressed to a particular person, it gains a degree of propriety, that the best-conducted soliloquy, in a tragedy, must ever want. Our impatience under any pressures of grief, and disorder of mind, makes such passionate expostulations with the persons supposed to cause such uneasinesses, very natural. Judgment is chiefly shewn, by opening the interesting complaint just at such a period of time, as will give occasion for the most tender sentiments, and the most sudden and violent turns of passion to be displayed. Ovid may, perhaps, be blamed for a sameness of subjects, in these epistles of his heroines ; whose
distresses

* Propertius, however, has one composition of this sort entitled, *Epistola Arethuse ad Lycotam*. Lib. IV. Eleg. 3.

distresses are almost all occasioned by their lovers forsaking them. His epistles are likewise too long; which circumstance has forced him into a repetition and languor in the sentiments. It would be a pleasing task, and conduce to the formation of a good taste, to shew how differently Ovid and the Greek tragedians, have made Medea, Phædra, and Deianira speak, on the very same occasions. Such a comparison would abundantly manifest, the FANCY and WIT of Ovid, and the JUDGMENT and NATURE of Euripides and Sophocles. If the character of Medea was not better supported in the tragedy, which Ovid is said to have produced, and of which Quintilian speaks so advantageously, than it is in her epistle to Jason, one may venture to declare, that the Romans would not yet have been vindicated, from their inferiority to the Greeks, in tragic poesy.

THE EPISTLE before us is translated by POPE, with faithfulness and with elegance; and much excels any that Dryden translated in the volume he published: many of which were done by some "of the mob of gentlemen that wrote with ease;" that is, Sir C. Scroop, Caryl, Pooley, Wright, Tate, Buckingham, Cooper, and other careless rhymers. A good translation of these epistles, is as much wanted, as one of Juvenal; for, out of sixteen satires of that poet, Dryden himself translated but six. We can now boast of happy translations in verse, of almost all the
great

great poets of antiquity ; whilst the French have been poorly contented with only prose translations of Homer and Horace, which, says Cervantes, can no more resemble the original, than the wrong side of tapestry can represent the right. The inability of the French tongue to express many Greek or Roman ideas with facility and grace, is here visible : but the Italians have Horace translated by Pallavacini, Theocritus by Ricolotti and Salvini, Ovid by Anguillara, the *Æneid*, admirably well, in blank verse, by Annibal Caro, and the *Georgics* in blank verse also, by Daniello.

I return to Ovid, by observing, that he has put into the mouth of his heroine a greater number of pretty panegyrical epigrams, than of those tender and passionate sentiments, which suited her character, and made her SENSIBILITY in amours so famous. What can be more elegantly gallant than this compliment to Phaon ?

*Sume fidem & pharetram : fies manifestus Apollo ;
Accedant capiti cornua ; Bacchus eris.*

This thought seems indisputably to have been imitated, in that most justly celebrated of modern epigrams :

*Lumine Acon dextro, capta est Leonilla sinistro,
Et potis est forma vincere uterque Deos ;*

Blande

Blande puer, lumen quod habes, concede sorori,
Sic tu cæcus AMOR, sic erit illa VENUS.

My chief reason for quoting these delicate lines, was to point out the occasion of them, which seems not to be sufficiently known. They were made on Louis de Maguiron, the most beautiful man of his time, and the great favourite of Henry III. of France, who lost an eye at the siege of Issoire; and on the Princess of Eboli, a great beauty, but who was deprived of the sight of one of her eyes, and who was at the same time mistress of Philip II. King of Spain.

It was happily imagined to write an epistle in the character of Sappho, who had spoken of the joys of love with more warmth and feeling, than any writer of antiquity; and who described the violent symptoms attending this passion, in so strong and lively a manner, that the physician Erasistratus is said to have discovered the secret malady of the Prince Antiochus, who was in love with his mother-in-law Stratonice, merely by examining the symptoms of his patient's distemper by this description. Addison has inserted in two of his Spectators *, an elegant character of this poetess; and has given a translation of two of her fragments, that are exquisite in their kind: a translation, which we may presume Addison himself re-

vised

* N°. 223—229.

vised, and altered, for his friend Philips. As these two pieces are pretty well known, by being found in so popular a book as the Spectator, I shall say no more of them; but shall add two more of her fragments, which, though very short, are yet highly beautiful and tender. The first represents the languor and listlessness of a person deeply in love; we may suppose the fair author looking up earnestly on her mother, casting down the web on which she was employed, and suddenly exclaiming;

Γλυκεια μητερ, ου τοι
Δυναμαι κρεκειν τον ισον,
Ποθω δαμεισα παιδος,
Βραδιναν δι' Αφροδιταν *.

Dulcis mater! non
Possum texere telum
Amore victa pueri,
Per acrem Venerem.

The other fragment is of the descriptive kind; and seems to be the beginning of an Ode addressed to EVENING: it is quoted by Demetrius Phalereus †,

Εσπερε παντα φερεις,
Φερεις οινον, φερεις αιγα,
Φερεις μαλ' ερι παιδα.

Vesper

† Inter novem illustr. fœmin. fragmenta. Edit. a Fulvio Ur-
fino, Antwerp.

† Edit. Oxon. p. 104.

Vesper omnia fers;
 Fers vinum, fers capram,
 Fers matri filiam.

From these little fragments, the first of which is an example of the *pathetic*, and the second of the *picturesque*, the *manner* of Sappho might have been gathered, if the two longer odes had not been preserved in the treatises of Dionysius, and of Longinus. I cannot help adopting the application Addison has made of his two lines of Phædrus, to these remains of our poetess; which is perhaps one of the most elegant, and happy applications that ever was made from any classic;

O suavis anima! qualem te dicam bonam
 Antehac fuisse, tales cum sint reliquæ *1

THE versification of this translation of POPE, is, in point of melody, next to that of his pastorals. Perhaps the two following lines, in which alliteration is successfully used, are the most harmonious verses in our language, I mean in rhyme:

Ye gentle gales! beneath my body blow,
 And softly lay me on the waves below

The peculiar musicalness of the first of these lines, in particular,

* Phædr. Fab. L. iii. Fab. i. ver. 5, 6.

particular, arises principally from its consisting entirely of iambic feet: which have always a striking, although unperceived, effect in an English verse. As for example;

Th' gentle gales beneath my body blow.

Even if the last foot alone be an iambic, it casts a har- over a whole line *:

Rapt into future times the bard begun.

There are many niceties in our versification, which few attend to, and which would demand a regular treatise fully to discuss: we should surely use every possible art, to render our rough Northern language harmonious.

FENTON also has given us a translation of this epistle to Phaon; but it is in no respect equal to POPE's: he has added another, of his own invention, of Phaon to Sappho, in which the story of the transformation of the former, from an old mariner to a beautiful youth is well told. Fenton † was an elegant scholar, and had

* See WARTON on Spenser, Sect. xi. pag. 259, &c.

† POPE highly valued him. In a letter to Gay, Vol. VIII. p. 169. he says, "I have just received the news of the death of

had an exquisite taste ; the books he translated for POPE in the *Odyssey*, are superior to Brome's. In his *Miscellanies* are many pieces worthy notice ; particularly, his epistle to Southerne ; the *Fair Nun*, imitated from Fontaine ; *Olivia* a character, an Ode to the Sun, and one to Lord Gower, written in the true spirit of *Lyric poetry*, of which the following allegory is an example :

Enamour'd of the *SEINE*, celestial fair,
 The blooming pride of *Thetis* azure train,
Bacchus, to win the nymph who caus'd his care,
 Lash'd his swift tigers to the Celtic plain ;
 There secret in her sapphire cell,
 He with the *Nais* wont to dwell,
 Leaving the nectar'd feasts of *Jove* ;
 And where her mazy waters flow,
 He gave the mantling vine to grow,
 A trophy to his love.

HIS

of a friend, whom I esteemed almost as many years as you ; poor Fenton. He died at East-hamstead, of indolence and inactivity ; let it not be your fate, but use exercise." Craggs, who had never received a learned education, had some time before commissioned POPE to find out for him some polite scholar, whom he proposed to take into his family, that he might acquire a taste of literature, by the conversation and instruction of the person POPE should recommend. He accordingly chose Fenton ; but Craggs died unluckily for the execution of this scheme. Mr. Craggs had the candor to make no objection to Fenton, tho' he was a nonjuror ; being, I presume, convinced he was honest as well as learned.

HIS tragedy of Mariamne has undoubtedly merit, tho' the diction be too figurative and ornamental; it does indeed superabound in the richest poetic images: except this may be palliated by urging, that it suits the characters of oriental heroes, to talk in so high a strain, and to use such a luxuriance of metaphors.

FROM this EPISTLE of Sappho, I may take occasion to observe, that this species of writing, beautiful as it is, has not been much cultivated among us. Drayton, no despicable genius, attempted to revive it, and has left us some good subjects, tho' not very artfully handled *. We have also a few of this sort of epistles by the late Lord Hervey, in the fourth volume of Doddsley's Miscellanies †, Flora to Pompey ‡, Arisbe to Marius, and Monimia to Philocles, in which last are some pathetic strokes, and Roxana to Usbeck, taken from the incomparable § letters

* The best of his ENGLAND'S HEROICAL EPISTLES, are King John to Matilda, Elinor Cobham to Duke Humphry, William De Le Poole to Queen Margaret; Jane Shore to Edward IV. Lord Surrey to Geraldine, and Lady Jane Grey to Lord Guildford Dudley. In his BARON'S WARS, there are many strokes not unworthy of Spenser; and his Nymphidia must be allowed to be a perfect pattern of pastoral elegance.

† Page 90. & seq.

‡ Taken from Fontenelle.

§ Lettres Persans. A Geneve 1716.

letters of the late president Montesquieu : a fine * original work in which the customs and manners of the Persians are painted with the utmost truth and liveliness, and which have been faintly imitated by the Jewish, Chinese, and other Letters. The beauty of this writer is his expressive brevity ; which Lord Hervey has lengthened to a degree that is unnatural ; especially, as Roxana is supposed to write just after she has swallowed a deadly poison, and during its violent operations. I have lately seen several pieces of this species, which, as the subjects are striking, will, I hope, one day see the light. They are entitled, " TASSO TO LEONORA ; written in an interval of his madness : LUCAN TO NERO ; just after he was condemned to death : Lady OLIVIA TO CLEMENTINA, on her refusing to marry Grandison : CHARLES V. from the monastery he retired to, to the King of France : GALGACUS, general of the Britons, to AGRICOLA that commanded the Romans : MONTESUMA TO CORTEZ : VITIKINDA, the general of

* Lady Wortley Montague, who resided so long at Constantinople, said, " One would have thought the Baron de Montesquieu had been born and bred a Turk, he has described that people, and the women particularly, so very accurately." — " I had rather have written the short history of the Troglodites, consisting only of ten pages, than the admirable, the immortal history of Thuanus in ten great volumes." MES PENSEES. CCXLV.

of the Saxons, to CHARLEMAGNE: and ROSMUNDA to ALBOINUS, King of the Lombards."

THE Italians had a writer of heroic epistles called Antonio Bruni; these are some of his subjects; the HEBREW MOTHER to TITUS VESPASIAN, ERMINIA to TANCRED, CATHERINE of ARRAGON to HENRY VIII. TURNUS to LAVINIA, TANCRED to CLORINDA, ARMIDA to RINALDO, RADAMISTUS to ZENOBIA, NAUSICAA to ULYSSES, ANGELICA to ORLANDO, SOPHONISBA to MASINISSA, SEMIRAMIS to NINUS, HONORIA to ATTILA.

BUT of all stories, ancient or modern, there is not perhaps a more proper one to furnish out an elegiac epistle, than that of ELOISA and ABELARD. Their distresses were of a most SINGULAR and PECULIAR kind; and their names sufficiently known, but not grown trite or common by too frequent usage. POPE was a most excellent IMPROVER, if no great original INVENTOR; for, as we have seen what an elegant superstructure he has raised on the little dialogue of the Comte de Gabalis, so shall we perceive, in the sequel of this Section, how finely he has worked up the hints of distress, that are scattered up and down in Abelard's and Eloisa's Letters; and, in a little French * history of their lives and misfortunes.

* Abelard

* Abelard was reputed the most handsome, as well as most learned man of his time; according to the kind of learning then in vogue. An old chronicle, quoted by † Andrew du Chesne informs us, that scholars flocked to his lectures from all quarters of the latin world. And his cotemporary St. Bernard relates, that he numbered among his disciples many principal ecclesiastics, and cardinals, at the court of Rome. Abelard himself boasts, that when he retired into the country, he was followed by such immense crowds of scholars, that they could get neither lodgings nor provisions sufficient for them; “*ut nec locus hospitii, nec terra sufficeret alimentis †.*” He met with the fate of many learned men, to be embroiled in controversy, and

* He was born at Palais near Nantes in Brittany, at the beginning of the twelfth century, and studied at Paris under William Champeaux.

† In Hist. Cal. Abel. p. 1155. And the high opinion that was held of his learning, may appear from his epitaph by Pet. de Clugny.

Gallorum Socrates, Plato maximus Hesperiarum,
Noster Aristoteles, Logicis, quicunque fuerunt,
Aut par, aut melior, studiorum cognitus orbi
Princeps, ingenio varius, subtilis et acer;
Omnia vi superans rationis & arte loquendi,
Abelardus erat, &c.—

Vid. Abel. & Helois. Epist. pag. 235. Edit. Rawlinson, 1718.

† Abelardi Opera, p. 19.

and accused of heresy; for St. * Bernard whose influence and authority was very great, got his opinion of the Trinity condemned, at a council held at Sens, 1140. But the talents of † Abelard were not confined to theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, and the thorny paths of scholasticism: he gave proofs of a lively genius, by many poetical performances; in-
 somuch, that he was reputed to be the author of the famous Romance of the Rose; which, however, was indisputably written by JOHN OF MEUN, a little city on the banks of the Loire, about four leagues from Orleans; which gave occasion to Marot to exclaim;

De

* The character of this St. Bernard was singular; the president Henault thus speaks of him. "Il avoit ete donne a cet homme extraordinaire de dominer les esprits," one beholds him pass in a moment from the depth of a desert to a court, where he never was displaced; where he lived without titles, without a public character, enjoying that personal weight which is above authority.—Yet no less a man of sanctity, and a man of wit, than a great politician: His sermons are master-pieces of sentiment and energy. *Histoire de France: Troisième Race.* p. 145.

† One is sometimes surpris'd to see the honours and veneration formerly paid to men of literature, in comparison of what they meet with at present. "As every human advantage is attended with inconveniencies, the change of men's ideas in this particular, may probably be ascribed to the invention of PRINTING; which has rendered books so common, that even men of slender fortunes can have access to them." *Hume's History of Great-Britain*, p. 149.

De Jean de Meun s'enfle le cours de Loire.

Of this ancient French poet much more will be said, in the course of this work, when we come occasionally to speak of Chaucer : suffice it at present to observe, that he certainly continued and finished the Romance of the Rose, which * William de Lorris had left imperfect, forty years before. If chronology † did not absolutely contradict the notion of Abelard's being the author of this very celebrated piece, yet are there internal arguments sufficient to confute it. The mistake seems to have flowed, from his having given Eloisa the name of Rose, in one of the many sonnets he addressed to her. In this romance, there are many severe and satirical strokes on the character of Eloisa, which the pen of † Abelard never would have

* Whom Marot praises as the Ennius of France,

Notre Ennius Guillaume de Lorris.

He took his name from the town of Lorris where he was born.

† There is undoubted evidence, that it was written an hundred years after Abelard flourished.

† Eloisa speaks thus of Abelard's poetry and skill also in music ; for he sung his own verses. " Duo autem fateor, tibi specialiter inerant, quibus sceminarum quarumlibet animos statim allicere poteras ; dictandi videlicet & cantandi gratia. Quæ cæteros minimè philosophos assecutos esse novimus. Quibus quidem quasi ludo quodam laborem exercitii recreans philosophici, pleraque amatorio metro vel rithmo composita reliquisti carmina, quæ præ nimia suavitate tam dictaminis, quam cantus, sæpius frequentata, tuum in ore omnium nomen incessanter tenebant ;

have given. In one passage she is introduced speaking with indecency and obscenity; in another, all the vices and bad qualities of women are represented, as assembled together in her alone.

Qui les mœurs féminins savoit,
Car tres-tous en soi les avoit.

In a very old epistle dedicatory, addressed to Philip the fourth of France, by this same John of Meun, and prefixed to a French translation of Boetius, a very popular Book at that time, it appears, that he also translated the epistles of Abelard to Heloisa, which were in high vogue at the court. He mentions also that he had translated Vegetius on the Art military, and a book called the Wonders of Ireland; these works shew us the taste of the age: his words are; "t'envoye ores * Boece de consolation, que j'ai translaté en Francois, jacoit que bien entendes le Latin †."

It is to be regretted, that we have no exact picture of the person and beauty of Eloisa; Abelard
M himself

nebant; ut etiam illiteratos melodiæ dulcedo tui non sineret immemores esse." Epist. i. Heloissæ. p. 51.

It is observable, that POPE judiciously softened and harmonized her name to *Eloisa* from *Heloissa*.

* Chaucer also translated this piece.—Boetius was a most admired classic of that age; indeed he deserves to be so of any.

† This sentence strongly also characterises the times.

himself says, that she was, "*facie non infima*;" her extraordinary learning many circumstances concur to confirm; particularly one, which is, that the nuns of the Paraclete are wont to have the office of Whitsunday read to them in Greek, to perpetuate the memory of her understanding that language. The curious may not be displeas'd to be informed, that the Paraclete was built in the parish of Quincey, upon the little river Arduzon, near Nogent, upon the Seine. Happening to be in France a few years ago, I had the curiosity to visit the very spot; which I surveyed with much veneration. A lady, learned as was Eloisa in that age, who indisputably understood the latin, greek, and hebrew tongues, was a kind of prodigy: her literature, says * Abelard, "*in toto regno nominatissimam fecerat*": and, we may be sure, more thoroughly attached him to her. Bussy Rabutin speaks in high terms of commendation, of the purity of Eloisa's latinity: a judgment worthy a French count! There is a force, but not an elegance in her style; which is blemished, as might be expected, by many phrases unknown to the pure ages of the Roman language, and by many Hebraisms, borrowed from the translation of the bible.

I NOW propose to pass through the † EPISTLE,

* Abel. Opera, p. 10.

† The compliment which Prior paid our author on this EPISTLE,

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in order to give the reader a view of the various turns and tumults of passion, and the different sentiments with which Eloisa is agitated : and at the same time, to point out what passages are borrowed, and how much improved, from the original Letters. From this analysis, her struggles and conflicts, between duty and pleasure, between penitence and passion, will more amply and strikingly appear.

SHE begins with declaring, how the peacefulness of her situation has been disturbed, by a letter of her lover accidentally falling into her hands. This exordium is beautiful, being worked up with an awakening solemnity ; she looks about her and breaks out at once.

M 2

* In

EPISTLE, is at once full of elegance and very lively imagery. He addresses it to Abelard, and says, that POPE has *wove* —

A silken web, and ne'er shall fade
Its colours ; gently has he laid
The mantle o'er thy sad distress,
And Venus shall the texture bless.
He o'er the weeping Nun has drawn,
Such artful folds of sacred lawn ;
That Love with equal grief and pride,
Shall see the crime he strives to hide,
And softly drawing back the veil,
The god shall to his vot'ries tell,
Each conscious tear, each blushing grace,
That deck'd dear Eloisa's face.

ALMA, p. 101.

* In these deep solitudes and awful cells †,
 Where heavenly-pensive CONTEMPLATION dwells,
 And ever-musing MELANCHOLY reigns;
 What means this tumult in a vestal's veins?
 Why rove my thoughts beyond this last retreat?
 Why feels my heart its long-forgotten heat?

She then resolves neither to mention nor to write the name of Abelard; but suddenly adds, in a dramatic manner,

‡ ————— The name appears
 Already written — wash it out, my tears!

She then addresses herself to the convent, where she was confined, in fine imagery:

§ Relentness walls! whose darksome round contains
 Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains.
 || Ye rugged rocks! which holy knees have worn,
 Ye grotts and caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn!
 Shrines where their vigils pale-ey'd virgins keep,
 And pitying saints whose statues learn to weep!

Theo'

* Ver. 1.

† "If I was ordered to find out the most happy, and the most miserable man in the world, I would look for them in a cloister;" said a man of penetration.

‡ V. 13.

§ V. 18.

|| This, and several other circumstances, in the scenery view of the monastery, which denote antiquity, may perhaps be a little blamed, on account of their impropriety, when introduced into a place so lately founded as was the Paraclete: but are so well imagined, and highly painted, that they demand excuse.

Tho' cold like you, unmov'd and silent grown,
I have not yet forgot myself to stone * !

She proceeds to enumerate the effects, which Abelard's relation of their misfortunes has had upon her ; yet notwithstanding what she suffers from them, she intreats him still to write.

† Yet write, O write me all ! that I may join
Griefs to thy griefs, and echo sighs to thine.

This is from the Letters—" Per ipsum itaque--- Christum obsecramus ; quatenus ancillulas ipsius & tuas, crebris literis de his, in quibus adhuc fluctuas, naufragiis certificare digneris, ut nos saltem quæ tibi solæ remansimus, doloris vel gaudii participes habeas †. On the mention of letters, she breaks out into that beautiful account of their use, which is finely improved from the latin.

§ Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid,
Some banish'd lover, or some captive maid ;

M 3

They

* " Forget thyself to marble" is an expression of Milton, as is also, " Caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn ;" and the epithets " pale-eyed, and twilight," are *first* used in the smaller poems of Milton, which Pope had just perhaps been reading.

† V. 41.

† Epist. i. Heloiss. pag. 46.

§ V. 51.

They live, they speak; they breathe, what love inspires,
 Warm from the soul and faithful to its fires *;
 The virgin's wish without her fear impart,
 Excuse the blush and pour out all the heart.

“ De quibuscunque autem nobis scribas, non parvum nobis remedium conferes; hoc saltem uno, quod te nostri memorem esse monstrabis.” She then quotes † an unnecessary passage of Seneca, and adds, “ Si imagines nobis amicorum absentium jucundæ sunt, quæ memoriæ renovant, & desiderium absentiæ falso atque inani solatio levant; quanto jucundiores sunt literæ, quæ amici absentis veras notas efferunt ‡?” The origin of Eloisa's passion is, with much art and knowledge

* It is to be hoped, that some of the fair sex, of the abilities of Eloisa, for we have two or three such at present in Great Britain, will answer the ingenious, but paradoxical philosopher of Geneva, who has vented many blasphemies against the passion of love. “ Il faut distinguer, says he, le *MORAL* du *physique* dans le sentiment de l'amour. Le *physique* est ce desir general qui porte une sexe a s'unir a l'autre; Le *moral* est ce qui determine ce desir, & le fixe sur un seul objet exclusivement; ou qui du moins lui donne pour cet objet preferè un plus grand degre d'energie. Or il est facile de voir que le moral de l'amour est un sentiment factice; nè de l'usage de la societé, & celebrè par les femmes avec beaucoup d'habilité & de soin, pour etablir leur empire, & rendre dominant le sexe qui devoit obeir. DISCOURS sur L'origine de l'INEGALITE parmi les hommes—Par. J. J. Rousseau Amsterdam, 1755. p. 78.

It is not to be wondered at that he who has written a satire against human society, should satirize its greatest blessing.

† Epist. p. 47.

‡ Ibid.

knowledge of human nature, ascribed to her admiration of her handsome preceptor : this circumstance is particularly poetical, and even sublime;

* My fancy form'd thee of angelick kind,
Some emanation of th' all-beauteous mind.

† How oft when press'd to marriage, have I said,
Curse on all laws but those which love has made!
Let wealth, let honour wait the wedded dame,
August her deed and sacred, be her fame;
Before true passion all these views remove,
Fame, wealth and honour, what are you to love?

These sentiments are plainly from the letters, "*Nihil unquam, deus scit, in te, nisi te requisivi; te pure non tua concupiscens. Non matrimonii fœdera, non dotes aliquas expectavi. Et si uxoris nomen sanctius ac validius videtur dulcius mihi semper extitit amicæ vocabulum, aut, si non indigneris, concubinæ vel scorti* †.—POPE has added a very injudicious thought,

§ The jealous God, when we profane his fires,
Those restless passions in revenge inspires,

And again,

|| Love free as air, at sight of human ties,
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.

M 4

It

* V. 61.

† V. 73.

‡ Epist. i. Heloiss. pag. 49.

§ V. 81.

|| V. 75.

It is improper for a person in the situation of Eloisa to mention Cupid; mythology is here out of its place. The Letters also furnished the next thought :

* Not Cæsar's empress would I deign to prove,
No, make me mistress of the man I love.

"DEUM testem invoco, si me Augustus, universo præsidens mundo, matrimonii honore dignaretur, totumque mihi orbem confirmaret in perpetuo præsidendum, charius mihi & dignius videretur, tua dici meretrix, quam illius imperatrix †." Next she describes their unparalleled happiness in the full and free enjoyment of their loves; but all at once stops short, and exclaims with eagerness, as if she at that instant saw the dreadful scene alluded to.

‡ Alas how chang'd ! what sudden horrors rise !
A naked lover bound and bleeding lies !
Where, where was Eloise ? her voice, her hand,
Her ponyard had oppos'd the dire command !
Barbarian, stay ! *that* bloody stroke restrain,
The crime was common, common be the pain §.

One

* V. 87. † Epist. i. Heloiss. pag. 50. ‡ V. 100.

§ It was difficult to speak of this catastrophe that befel Abeldard with any dignity and grace : our poet however has done it. I know not where castration is the chief cause of distress, in any other poem, except in a very extraordinary one of Catullus, where Atys, struck with madness by Bercynthia, in a fit of enthusiasm, inflicts this punishment on himself. After which

he

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One knows not which most to applaud, the lively imagery, the pathetic, or the artful decency, with

M 5

which

he laments his condition in very pathetic strains. The poem has been so little remarked on, that I shall take the liberty of inserting the following passage in the speech of Atys, which is very dramatic, full of spirit, and sudden changes of passion.

Egone a meâ remota hæc ferar in nemora domo ?
 Patriâ, bonis, amicis, genitoribus abero ?
 Abero foro, palestrâ, stadio, gymnasiis ?
 Miser, ah miser, querendum est etiam atque etiam, anime,
 Quod enim genus ? figura est ? ego numquid abierim ?
 Ego mulier ?—ego adolescens, ego ephebus, ego puer,
 Ego gymnasii fui flos, ego eram decus olei,
 Mihi januæ frequentes, mihi limina tepida ;
 Mihi floridis corollis redimita domus erat,
 Linquendum ubi esset orto mihi sole cubiculum.
 Egone deum ministra, & Cybeles famula ferar ?
 Egone mænas, ego mei pars, ego vir sterilis ero ?
 Ego viridis algida Idæ nive amicta loca colam ?
 Ego vitam agam sub altis Phrygiæ columinibus ?
 Ubi cervæ sylvicultrix, ubi aper nemorivagus ?
 Jam jam dolet quod egi, jam, jam quoque pœnitet !

This whole poem being of a strain superior to any thing in the Roman poesy, and more passionate and sublime than any part of Virgil, and being also so much above the tender and elegant genius of Catullus, whose name it bears, inclines me to think it a translation from some Grecian writer ; and perhaps, if the reader will peruse the whole, it will give him the truest notion of an old dithyrambic, of any poem antiquity has left us. The text is in some places much corrupted, but enough remains pure and intelligible to place it at the head of latin poetry,

which this transaction is delicately hinted at, in these most excellent lines : which are the genuine voice of nature and passion, and place the object intended to be impressed on the reader full in his sight.

SHE next reminds Abelard of the solemnity of her taking the veil, from verse one hundred and six, to one hundred and eighteen, which are highly beautiful, particularly these circumstances attending the rite—

As with *cold* lips I kiss'd the sacred veil,
The shrines all *trembled*, and the lamps *grew pale*!

These two circumstances are fancied with equal force and propriety ; and this supposed prognostic of the uneasiness she would undergo in the monastic life, is very affecting. But her passion intruded itself even in the midst of this awful act of devotion ; the strength of which she represents by this particular,

* Yet then, to those dread altars as I drew,
Not on the *Cross* my eyes were fix'd, but *Thou*.

Here she gives her fondness leave to expatiate into many luscious ideas ;

Still

etry, how strangely soever it has been neglected. It ought to be observed, that the seventh, eighth and ninth lines of this quotation bear a wonderful resemblance to a fine passage in the book of Job, ch. xxix. ver. 6. & seq. I shall only add, that this is the only complete poem of the kind.

* Still on that breast enamour'd let me lie,
Still drink delicious poison from thy eye,
Pant on thy lip, and to thy heart be prest;

And then follows a line exquisitely passionate, and worthy the *sensibility* of Sappho or of Eloisa,

Give all thou *canst* ?—and let me dream the *rest*.

Suddenly she here checks the torrent of this amorous transport—

† Ah no—instruct me other joys to prize,
With other beauties charm my partial eyes.
Full in my view set all the bright abode,
And make my soul quit Abelard for God.

She puts him in mind of his being the father and founder of the monastery, and entreats him to visit his flock on that account. This topic is taken from the Letters.

‡ From the false world in early youth they fled,
By thee to mountains, wilds, and desarts led;
You rais'd these hallow'd walls; the desert smil'd,
And paradise was open'd in the wild.

“ Nihil hic super alienum ædificasti fundamentum;
totum quod hic est, tua creatio est. Solitudo hæc
feris tantum, sine latronibus vacans, nullam hominum
habitationem noverat, nullam domum habueret. In
ipsis

ipsis cubilibus ferarum, in ipsis latibulis latronum, ubi nec nominari deus solet, divinum erexisti tabernaculum, et spiritus sancti proprium dedicasti templum. Nihil ad hoc ædificandum ex regum vel principum opibus intulisti, cum plurima posses & maxima, ut quicquid fieret, tibi soli posset ascribi *." Which last sentence is finely improved by POPE; being at once heightened with pathos and poetic imagery; and containing an oblique satire on benefactions raised by avarice, or extorted by fear.

† No weeping orphan saw his father's stores
Our shrines irradiate or emblaze our floors;
No silver saints by dying misers giv'n,
Here brib'd the rage of ill-requited heav'n;
But such plain roofs as piety could raise.

No part of this poem, or indeed of any of POPE's productions is so truly poetical, and contains such strong painting, as the passage to which we are now arrived;—The description of the convent, where POPE's religion certainly aided his fancy. It is impossible to read it without being struck with a pensive pleasure, and a sacred awe, at the solemnity of the scene; so picturesque are the epithets.

‡ In these *lone* walls, (their days eternal bound)
These *moss-grown* domes with *spiry* turrets crown'd,
Where *awful* arches make the noonday night,
And the *dim* windows shed a *solemn* light;

Thy

* Epist. i. Heloiss. p. 46.

† V. 135.

‡ V. 141.

Thy eyes diffus'd a reconciling ray.

All the circumstances that can amuse and sooth the mind of a solitary are next enumerated in this expressive manner : and the reader that shall be disgusted at the length of the quotation, one might pronounce, has no taste, either for painting or poetry :

- * The darksome pines that o'er yon rocks reclin'd
Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,
The wand'ring streams that shine between the hills,
The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills,
The dying gales that pant upon the trees,
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze ;
No more these scenes my meditation aid,
Or lull to rest the visionary maid.

The effect and influence of MELANCHOLY, who is beautifully personified, on every object that occurs, and on every part of the convent, cannot be too much applauded, or too often read, as it is founded on nature and experience. That temper of mind casts a gloom on all things.

- † But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,
Long-sounding isles, and intermingled graves,
Black MELANCHOLY sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose ;
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
Shades every flower and darkens every green,

Deepens

Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.

The figurative expressions, *throws*, and *breathes*, and *browner* horror, are, I verily believe, some of the strongest and boldest in the English language. The IMAGE of the Goddess MELANCHOLY sitting over the convent, and as it were expanding her dreadful wings over its whole circuit, and diffusing her gloom all around it, is truly sublime, and strongly conceived.

ELOISA proceeds to give an account of the opposite sentiments, that divide and disturb her soul; these are hinted in the Letters also.

* Ah wretch! believ'd the spouse of God in vain,
Confess'd within the slave of love and man!
I ought to grieve, but cannot what I ought;
I mourn the lover, not lament the fault.

This however is improved greatly on the original. "Castam me prædicant, qui non deprehenderunt hypocritam †."—"Quomodo etiam pænitentia peccatorum dicitur, quantacunque sit corporis afflictio, si mens adhuc ipsam peccandi retinet voluntatem, & pristinis æstuat desideriis ‡?" She then fondly calls on Abelard for assistance,

O come!

* V. 190.

† Epist. p. 68.

‡ Ibid. 66.

* O come! O teach me nature to subdue,
Renounce my love, my life, myself and—you!
Fill my fond heart with God alone, for he
Alone can rival, can succeed to thee!

Fired with this idea of religion, she takes occasion to dwell on the happiness of a BLAMELESS vestal, one who has no such sin on her conscience, as she has, to bemoan. The life of such an one is described at length by such *sorts* of pleasure, as none but a spotless nun can partake of; the climax of her happiness is finely conducted;

† For her the SPOUSE prepares the bridal ring,
For her white virgins hymeneals sing,
For her th' unfading rose of Eden blooms,
And wings of Seraphs shed divine perfumes,
To sounds of heavenly harps she dies away,
And melts in visions of eternal day!

What a judicious and poetical use hath POPE here made of the opinions of the mystics and quietists: how would Fenelon have been delighted with these lines! True poetry, after all, cannot well subsist, at least is never so striking, without a tincture of enthusiasm. The sudden transition has a fine effect;

Far

* Far other dreams my erring soul employ,
Far other raptures of unholy joy.

Which raptures are painted with much sensibility, and in very animating colours. “Nec etiam dormienti suis illusionibus parcant.”

Again,

† Oh curst dear horrors of all-conscious night;
How glowing guilt exalts the keen delight!

This is very forcibly expressed. She proceeds to recount a dream; in which I was always heavily disappointed, because the imagined distress is such, as might attend the dreams of any person whatever †.

§ ———Methinks we wand’ring go
Thro’ dreary wastes, and weep each other’s woe,
Where round some mouldring tow’r pale ivy creeps,
And low-brow’d rocks hang nodding o’er the deeps;
Sudden you mount, you beckon from the skies,
Clouds interpose, &c.

These are, indisputably, picturesque lines; but what I want is a VISION of some such appropriated, and peculiar distress, as could be incident to none but Eloisa; and which should be drawn from, and have reference

* V. 123.

† V. 129.

‡ It is partly from Dido’s dream.

§ V. 242.

reference to, her single story. What distinguishes Homer and Shakespear from all other poets, is, that they do not give their readers GENERAL ideas: every image is the particular and unalienable property of the person who uses it; it is suited to no other; it is made for him or her alone. Even Virgil himself is not free from this fault; but is frequently general and indiscriminating, where Homer is minutely circumstantial. She next compares his situation with her own:

* For thee the fates, severely kind, ordain
A cool suspense from pleasure and from pain;
Thy life a long dead calm of fix'd repose,
No pulse that riots, and no blood that glows †.

Here Eloisa glances with great modesty and delicacy, at the irreparable misfortune of her mutilated lover, which she always mentions with regret. I question whether it may be improper to alleviate the dryness of these critical remarks, with the following story; which I wish had fallen into the hands of Fontaine.

“ THE Greeks waged war upon the duke of Benevento, and made him very uneasy. Thedbald, Marquis

* V. 250.

† The four similes that follow, drawn from religion, are admirable.

Marquis of Spoleto, his ally, marching to his assistance, and having taken some prisoners, ordered them to be castrated, and in that condition sent them back to the Greek general, with orders to tell him, that he had done it to oblige the emperor, whom he knew to be a lover of eunuchs; and that he would endeavour to send him, in a short time a much greater number of them. The Marquis was preparing to be as good as his word, when one day a woman, whose husband had been taken prisoner, came all in tears to the camp, and begged to speak to Thedbald. The Marquis having asked her the cause of her grief, My Lord, says she, I wonder that such a valiant hero as you should trifle away your time in warring with women, when men are unable to resist you. Thedbald replied, that, since the days of the Amazons, he had never heard that war had been made upon women. My Lord, answered the Greek woman, can a crueller be made upon us, than to deprive our husbands of what gives us health, pleasure, and children! When you make eunuchs of them, it is mutilating us, not them: you have lately taken away our cattle and goods, without any complaint from me: but this being an irreparable loss to several of my neighbours, I could not avoid imploring the compassion of the conqueror. The whole army was so pleased with this woman's ingenuous declaration, that they restored her husband to her, and all they had taken from her. As she was going away,
Thedbald

Thedbald asked her, what she would be willing should be done to her husband, if he was found in arms again. He has eyes, said she, a nose, hands, and feet: these are his own, which you may take from HIM, if he deserves it; but leave him, if you please, what belongs to ME *."

A HINT in the Letters has been beautifully heightened, and elevated into exquisite poetry, in the next paragraph. Eloisa says only, "Inter ipsa missarum solemnina, ubi purior esse debeat oratio, obscœna earum voluptatum phantasmata ita sibi penitus miserrimam captivant animam, ut turpitudinibus illis, magis quam orationi, vacem.---Nec solum quæ egimus, sed loca pariter & tempora †," &c.--- Let us see how this has been improved,

‡ What scenes appear, where'er I turn my view,
The dear ideas where I fly pursue,
Rise in the grove, before the altar rise—

Then follows a circumstance peculiarly tender and proper, as it refers to a particular excellence of Abelard.

§ THY VOICE I seem in every hymn to hear,
With every bead I drop too soft a tear.

To

* Bibliothéque Universelle, Tom. XI. p. 10.

† Epist. II. Heloiss. pag. 67. ‡ V. 251. § V. 269.

To which succeeds that sublime description of a high mass, which came from the poet's soul, and is very striking.

* When from the censer clouds of fragrance roll,
And swelling organs lift the rising soul,
One thought of thee puts all the pomp to flight;
Priests, tapers, temples, swim before my sight,
In seas of flame my plunging soul is drown'd,
While altars blaze, and angels tremble round.

I BELIEVE few persons have ever been present at the celebrating a mass in a good choir; but have been extremely affected with awe, if not with devotion; which ought to put us on our guard, against the insinuating nature of so pompous and alluring a religion as popery. Lord Bolingbroke being one day present at this solemnity, in the chapel at Versailles, and seeing the archbishop of Paris elevate the host, whispered his companion the Marquis de * * * * *, "If I were king of France, I would always perform this ceremony myself."

ELOISA now acknowledges the weakness of her religious efforts, and gives herself up to the prevalence of her passion.

† Come, with one glance of those deluding eyes,
Blot out each bright idea of the skies;

Take

* V. 259.

† V. 280.

Take back that grace, that sorrow, and these tears,
Take back my fruitless penitence and pray'rs;
Snatch me just mounting, from the blest abode,
Assist the fiends, and tear me from my God!

Suddenly, religion rushes back on her mind and she exclaims eagerly,

* No fly me, fly me! far as pole to pole!—
Ah, *come not, write not, think not* once of me,
Nor share one pang of all I felt for thee:
Thy oaths I quit, thy memory resign,
Forget, renounce me, hate whate'er was mine.

This change is judicious and moving. And the following invocation to hope, faith, and christian grace, to come and take full possession of her soul, is solemn and suited to the condition of her mind; for it seems to be the poet's intention to shew the force of religion over passion at last, and to represent her as a little calm and resigned to her destiny, and way of life. To fix her in which holy temper the circumstance that follows may be supposed to contribute. For she relates an incident to Abelard, which had made a very deep impression on her mind, and cannot fail of making an equal one, on the mind of those readers, who can relish true poetry, and strong imagery. The scene she paints is awful: she represents herself lying

lying on a tomb, and thinking she heard some * spirit calling to her in every low wind,—

† Here as I watch'd the dying lamps around,
From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound,
Come sister come, (it said, or seem'd to say)
Thy place is here, sad sister, come away !
Once like thyself I trembled, wept and pray'd †,
Love's victim then, but now a fainted maid.

This scene would make a fine subject for the pencil ; and is worthy a capital painter. He might place Eloisa in the long ile of a great Gothic church ; a lamp should hang over her head, whose dim and dismal ray should afford only light enough to make darkness visible. She herself should be represented in the *instant*, when she first hears this aerial voice, and in the attitude of *starting round* with astonishment and fear. And this was the method a very great master took, *to paint a sound*, if I may be allowed the expression. This subject was the baptism of Jesus Christ ; and in order to bring into the piece the remarkable incident of the voice from heaven, which

cried

* V. 308.

† Virgil may however have given the hint.—*Hinc exaudiri voces, & verba vocantis visa viri*—L. 4. 460.

‡ It is well contrived, that this invisible speaker should be a person that had been under the very same kind of misfortunes with Eloisa.

cried aloud, " This is my beloved son," he represented all the assembly that attended on the banks of Jordan, gazing up into heaven with the utmost ardor of amazement.

At this call of a sister in misfortune, who had been visited with a sad similitude of griefs with her own, Eloisa breaks out in a religious transport,

I come, I come ! prepare your roseate bow'rs,
 Cœlestial palms, and ever-blooming flow'rs;
 Thither where *sinners* may have rest I go !

She then calls on Abelard, to pay her the last sad offices ; and to be present with her in the article of death,

See my lips tremble, and my eyeballs roll—

And then a circumstance of personal fondness intervenes,

Suck my last breath, and catch the flying soul !

But she instantly corrects herself, and would have her Abelard attend her at these last solemn moments, only as a devout priest, and not as a fond lover. The image, in which she represents him coming
 to

to administer extreme unction, is striking and picturesque ;

Ah no—in sacred vestments mayst thou stand,
Thy hallow'd taper * *trembling* in thy hand,
Present the cross before my *lifted* eye,
Teach me at once, and learn of me, to die!

She adds, that it will be *some* consolation to behold him once more, tho' even in the agonies of death,

Ah then! thy once-lov'd Eloisa see!
It will be *then* no crime to *gaze* on me!

Which last line I could never read without great emotion ; it is at once so pathetic, and so artfully points back to the whole train and nature of their misfortunes. The circumstances, she wishes may attend the death of Abelard, are poetically imagined, and are also agreeable to the notions of mystic devotion. The death of St. Jerome is finely painted by DOMENICINO, with such attendant particulars,

† In trance ecstatic may thy pangs be drown'd,
Bright clouds descend, and angels watch thee round,
From

* The words printed in Italics, ought to be looked on as particularly beautiful.

AND WRITINGS OF POPE. 265

From opening skies may streaming glories shine,
And saints embrace thee with a love like mine.
May one kind grave unite each hapless name,
And graft my love immortal on thy fame!

This wish was fulfilled. The body of Abelard, who died twenty years before Eloisa, was sent to Eloisa, who interred it in the monastery of the Paraclete, and it was accompanied with a very extraordinary form of Absolution, from the famous Peter de Clugny; "Ego Petrus Cluniacensis abbas, qui Petrum Abelardum in monachum Cluniacensem recepi, & corpus ejus furtim delatum Heloissæ Abbatisæ, & monialibus Paracleti concessi, auctoritate omnipotentis Dei, & omnium sanctorum, absolvo eum, pro officio, ab omnibus peccatis suis *."—"Eloisa herself, says † Vigneul Marville, solicited for this absolution, and Peter de Clugny willingly granted it; on what it could be founded, I leave to our learned theologists to determine. In certain ages, opinions have prevailed, for which no solid reason can be given." When Eloisa died in 1163, she was interred by the side of her beloved husband: I must not forget to mention, for the sake of those who are fond of miracles, that when she was put into the grave, Abelard stretched out his arms to receive her, and closely embraced her.

N

ELOISA,

* Epist. Abel. & Heloiss. pag. 238.

† Melanges, T. ii. p. 55.

ELOISA, at the conclusion of the EPISTLE to which we are now arrived, is judiciously represented as gradually settling into a tranquillity of mind, and seemingly reconciled to her fate. She can bear to speak of their being buried together, without violent emotions. Two lovers are introduced as visiting their celebrated tombs, and the behaviour of these strangers is finely imagined;

* From the full quire when loud Hosannas rise,
And swell the pomp of *dreadful* sacrifice,
Amid that scene, if some relenting eye,
Glance on the stone where our cold relics lie,
Devotion's self shall steal a thought from heav'n,
One human tear shall drop—and be forgiv'n!

WITH this last line, at first it appears, that the poem should have ended; for the eight additional verses †, concerning some poet, that haply might arise to sing their misfortune, are languid and flat, and diminish the pathos of the foregoing sentiments.

They

* V. 353.

† And sure if fate some future bard shall join
In sad similitude of grief to mine,
Condemn'd *whole years* in *absence* to deplore,
And *image* charms he must behold no more;
Such if there be, who loves so long, so well;
Let him our sad, our tender story tell!
The well-sung woes will sooth my pensive ghost;
He best can paint them, who can feel 'em most.

They might stand it should seem for the conclusion of almost any story, were we not informed, that they were added by the Poet in allusion to his own case, and the state of his own mind. For what determined him in the choice of the subject of this epistle, was the retreat of that lady into a nunnery, whose death he had lately so pathetically lamented, in a foregoing Elegy, and for whom he had conceived a violent passion. She was first beloved by a nobleman, an intimate friend of POPE, and, on his deserting her, retired into France, when, before she had made her last vows in the convent, to which she had retreated, she put an end to her unfortunate life. The recollection of this circumstance will add a beauty and a pathos to many passages in the poem, and will confirm the doctrine delivered above *, concerning the choice of subject.

THIS EPISTLE, is, on the whole, one of the most highly finished, and certainly the most interesting, of the pieces of our author ; and, together with the ELEGY to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady, is the only instance of the Pathetic POPE has given us. I think one may venture to remark, that the reputation of POPE, as a poet, among posterity, will be principally owing to his WINDSOR-FOREST, his RAPE OF THE LOCK, and his ELOISA TO ABELARD ; whilst the facts and characters alluded to

* Pag. 253.

to and exposed, in his later writings, will be forgotten and unknown, and their poignancy and propriety little relished. For WIT and SATIRE are transitory and perishable, but NATURE and PASSION are eternal.

FINIS.

This Essay is a very curious whole, one of the most highly finished and generally the most interesting of the pieces of the author, and, together with the Essay to the Memory of an illustrious man, is the only instance of the author's style as given to the world. I think one may venture to remark, that the reputation of Pope, as a poet, among posterity, will be principally owing to his *Wit and Satire*—for his *Nature and Passion*, and his *Heroic Poem*, will be the least and least admired.

ye

一、二、三、四、五、六、七、八、九、十、十一、十二、十三、十四、十五、十六、十七、十八、十九、二十、二十一、二十二、二十三、二十四、二十五、二十六、二十七、二十八、二十九、三十、三十一、三十二、三十三、三十四、三十五、三十六、三十七、三十八、三十九、四十、四十一、四十二、四十三、四十四、四十五、四十六、四十七、四十八、四十九、五十、五十一、五十二、五十三、五十四、五十五、五十六、五十七、五十八、五十九、六十、六十一、六十二、六十三、六十四、六十五、六十六、六十七、六十八、六十九、七十、七十一、七十二、七十三、七十四、七十五、七十六、七十七、七十八、七十九、八十、八十一、八十二、八十三、八十四、八十五、八十六、八十七、八十八、八十九、九十、九十一、九十二、九十三、九十四、九十五、九十六、九十七、九十八、九十九、一百。

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